

**Master of Science in International Business**

**Effects of Content on Facebook Post Popularity:  
The Case of Icelandair**

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INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS

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## **Declaration of Research Work Integrity**

This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not concurrently submitted in candidature of any degree. This thesis is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. Other sources are acknowledged with explicit references. A bibliography is appended.

By signing the present document I confirm and agree that I have read RU's ethics code of conduct and fully understand the consequences of violating these rules in connection with my thesis.

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## **Abstract**

The purpose of this study is to identify the kinds of content that are most likely to increase post popularity on Facebook. Icelandair, an Icelandic airline, was chosen as the subject of the study for two reasons. Firstly, the company has a very active and progressive social media marketing strategy. Secondly, competition amongst airlines has been increasing tremendously over the last decade, which has greatly increased the importance of marketing for the industry. The study is conducted using data from Icelandair's fan page. Posts posted between the beginning of 2011 and early 2015 (242 posts) are collected and then analyzed and categorized by post types. The post types used are: 'informative' posts, 'entertaining' posts, 'promotional' posts and 'social' posts. A regression analysis is then used to detect any relationships between posts types and several indicators of post popularity, these being the numbers of 'likes', 'comments' and 'shares' on a post. Furthermore the relationships between post vividness and popularity, and between post interactivity and popularity, are also examined. The results of the study indicate that there is a positive relationship between the levels of vividness a Facebook post exhibits and its post popularity. The results are mixed in the case of post interactivity, low interactivity ('link') having a negative effect on post popularity while high interactivity ('question') has a positive effect on post popularity. The results also suggest a strongly positive relationship between 'entertaining' posts and post popularity. The evidence further points towards a negative relationship between 'promotional' posts and post popularity.

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## 1 Introduction

The amount of content on the Internet has exploded over the last decade. This is in no small part due to the enormous growth of social media and the ability of users to easily generate new content. Today, sites such as Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn, which did not even exist a decade ago, constantly rank amongst the Internet's most popular websites. In fact nearly 4 in 5 active Internet users regularly visit social networking sites (Nielsen, 2014) and this has meant a big change to the Internet in terms of purpose and functionality. These developments have also brought with them big changes and a variety of new opportunities in terms of marketing. Customers are now more easily able to get in contact and communicate directly with each other, and also to engage and participate actively in brand communication through social networking sites and user-generated content (Rog, 2014).

Facebook is currently the biggest social networking site, with more than one billion users around the world (Statista, 2015-a). In 2007, Facebook launched Facebook Pages, also referred to as 'fan pages', in order to expedite user interaction with businesses and organizations. Fan pages allow businesses to establish a presence on Facebook and interact with users in much the same way as users are able to interact with each other. Within 24 hours after the launch of Facebook Pages, more than 100,000 fan pages had been created. Today, in the early months of 2015, there are more than 40 million active Facebook fan pages that represent businesses, companies or organisations in some way (Facebook, 2015-a). This increase has brought with it fierce competition and, in order to stand out from the rest, brands and businesses have had to become ever more creative with the material they publish on this new social media platform (Latka, 2014).

As their number grows, fan pages have also become increasingly popular amongst ordinary users. In 2011, more than 50% of social media users were found to follow updates on different brands and companies through social media (Belleghem *et al.*, 2011). A huge advantage to fan pages, as opposed to more conventional marketing platforms, is that they enable companies to communicate more directly with their customers and to deliver a range of interesting content. From the consumer's perspective, fan pages allow them to connect with their favorite brands easily and familiarize themselves with brands they might not know. Interaction through social media also allows consumers to identify those brands that represent their personal interests and values more easily. Moreover, consumers who connect with businesses or brands through fan pages are more likely to be more loyal and committed (Bagozzi and Dholakia, 2002).

One industry which has pushed the use of social media in marketing to the forefront of its business model is the airline industry. Amongst industries the airline sector ranks the highest in terms of the use of, and response rate to, customer interaction on both Facebook and Twitter (Social Bakers, 2013-a). Most airlines lay great emphasis on their relationship with customers, even so much that some have gone so far as to declare themselves to be “in the customer service business” and that “they just happen to fly airplanes” (Mika, 2013). Thus, Airline fan pages are amongst the most active pages on Facebook, being constantly updated with new information regarding flights and schedules as well as quick replies to any questions or inquiries by customers.

Despite the great popularity of Facebook fan pages, little is known about the actual content of the messages being sent out to consumers through these pages. Furthermore, current insight into why some messages might be more popular than others is limited. Without this information, businesses lack a clear idea on how they should model their social marketing strategy. They simply don’t know what kinds of messages work in terms of social media and which ones don’t. Thus the demand for further research on the subject is obvious. This paper proposes to investigate the makeup of the content being put out through fan pages. It will also endeavor to distinguish which type of content is the most likely to be popular amongst Facebook users. An Icelandic airline, Icelandair, has been chosen as the subject of this enquiry.

Icelandair is the oldest international airline in Iceland and currently the market leader in terms of direct international flights to and from Iceland. It is also a good example of an airline that has focused heavily on social media marketing. Its marketing strategy for social media, together with its other marketing ventures, have met with a lot of success. In 2011 the company was awarded the title “Marketing Company of the year” by IMARK, the Icelandic Marketing Association (Viðskiptablaðið, 2011) and in 2015 its “Heim um jólin” [‘Home for Christmas’] campaign won the Icelandic Nexpo marketing award (Hardarson, 2015). Icelandair is also a good example of a company that has successfully utilized social media marketing platforms. Icelandair has been very active on Facebook, its fan page having over 235,000 connected fans and counting.

## **1.1 Structure of Thesis**

The thesis is divided into seven chapters, including this Introduction. The second chapter will briefly discuss Web 2.0 and social networking sites followed by a description of Facebook and fan pages. The third chapter gives a brief overview of Icelandair, its objectives and marketing strategy. The fourth chapter provides a review of prior literature related to the subject at hand. The fifth chapter explains the methodology behind the analysis and gives an overview of the data used. Chapter 6 presents the results of the analysis and finally the last chapter will be devoted to discussing the results and their limitations.

## **2 Facebook**

This chapter will give a brief overview of Facebook; what it is, how it works, what features it has and the ways consumers can communicate through it. It will also take a look at fan pages, what features they possess and the opportunities they offer companies such as Icelandair. The aim of this chapter is to provide the necessary background needed in order to be better able to define and explain many of the points which follow in the following chapters.

### **2.1 Web 2.0**

During the past decades the Internet has grown enormously. Recently social interaction has become an ever bigger part of the web, leading many to the conclusion that it has entered a new phase in its existence. Thus, it has become commonplace to call the current manifestation of the Internet Web 2.0 (Andersen, 2007).

This term was first introduced at the O'Reilly Media Web conference in 2004 by Tim O'Reilly and Dale Dougherty. Web 2.0 is conceived as new and improved version of the World Wide Web. The improvements come in various forms, but the main focus is on the increased ability of users to generate new content as well as to collaborate with each other and react to each other's contributions. Blogs, video sharing sites and social media sites are what this new version of the web is based on and all of them encourage interactive sharing and participation amongst user (Whatis, 2015).

According to O'Reilly and Dougherty, the Internet was originally merely a tool for sharing and retrieving information. In its Web 2.0 form however, it is an integrated part of everyday life. Today, the vast majority of people in the developed world have access to the Internet and many use it regularly to communicate with others. In fact, the Internet has become such a large part of many people's lives that they increasingly rely more on it for information than on more traditional channels such as books or television (Nations, n.d.)

Websites thus increasingly enable community-based input, interaction, content-sharing and collaboration. Social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter have therefore come to define the meaning of Web 2.0. For example Facebook users upload an astonishingly high amount of content each day. This is not just limited to text messages but also includes pictures, videos and interactive applications. Simply put, users are constantly interacting with user-generated content (Henry, 2007).

## 2.2 Social Networking Sites

Social networking sites are a platform to build social networks or social relations among people who share common interests, activities, beliefs or real-life connections. The “cultures” that emerge around social network sites are of many different types. Some sites cater to mixed audiences while others focus on a common language or shared racial, sexual or nationality-based identities (Boyd and Ellison, 2012).

One defining feature of social networking sites is that they contain some sort of profile for each user. This means that they allow users to make their own public or semi-public introductions, to articulate a list of friends (other users with whom they share a connection) and then share their content with other users (Boyd and Ellison, 2012). Each social networking site has its own characteristics and they are all in a constant state of development. Most of them incorporate tools such as mobile connectivity, photo and video sharing and blogging. Users are able to share their ideas, pictures, posts, comments and messages with other users in their network (EBSCO, 2015).

What distinguishes network sites from other sites which allow users to upload and store their own content is that they enable users to express themselves and make their social networks visible to others. This often results in a connection between users that would not otherwise have been a reality (Haythornthwaite, 2005). The visibility of each profile varies from one site to another and also from one user to another. After users have registered on a networking site they are prompted to identify others in the network that they are familiar with or have a relationship with. These relationships have different label depending on each and every networking site. Terms such as “Friends”, “Contacts” and “Fans” are frequently used (Ellison *et al.*, 2007).

Most social networks provide various forms of interaction for their users. Usually communication happens through private messages, chat or email. Another method of initiating communication is leaving a comment on the users’ profile. While both private messages and comments are popular, they are not necessarily available on all social networking sites (Cho *et al.*, 2007).

## **2.3 Facebook**

Today, Facebook is the largest social network and the second most visited webpage after Google.com (Alexa, 2015). Facebook was created in February 2004 by Mark Zuckerberg along with his college roommates. First the network was only meant for Harvard University students but was soon extended to other universities as well. In September 2006, the network was finally extended beyond university students so that anyone with a registered email address could sign up for the service. The site is free to join but features targeted ads through which it creates revenue (Guardian, 2007). Today it has more than 1.415 billion registered members and on average 890 million daily active users (Statista, 2015-a). Facebook enables users to create profiles with photos, lists of personal interests, contact information, memorable events and other personal information such as employment and marital status. Users are able to communicate with friends and other users through private or public messages. Users can also share content such as images, video content and website URLs (Boyd and Ellison, 2012).

### **2.3.1 News Feed**

All content that users share appears on the ‘News Feed’, which is a list of the newest and most relevant content being shared with the user. Most of the content which appears on the news feed is in the form of posts. Posts can appear in various forms: as images, videos, URL-links, boosted advertisements and information from pages and groups that users follow on Facebook. The news feed plays an important role in the user experience of Facebook since it is intended as the main hub for user interaction. The order of the posts that appear in news feed is influenced by the numbers of ‘likes’ and ‘comments’ on each post (‘likes’ and ‘comments’ will be covered in more detail below). This ensures that users will usually only see posts that are of interest to them and from the fan pages they interact most with (Facebook, 2015-b, -l).

When users log in to Facebook, their default view of their news feed is set to ‘Top News’. This view displays the posts that are the most popular within the user’s network at that moment. These posts have usually gained a lot of attention from other users in form of ‘likes’ and ‘comments’. A specific algorithm determines the order of posts and thus the order is based on their relevance and not merely chronological order (Hicks, 2010).

The posts that appear in a user’s news feed are also influenced by the user’s connections and activity. This is intended to ensure the users see most of the content generated by the

friends that they interact most with. For example, posts that their friends have ‘commented’ on or ‘liked’ will appear in their news feeds. The same goes for other activities, even if these happen in public groups that the user himself is not part of (Facebook, 2015-b).

Users also have the option to choose another view which is called ‘Most Recent’. This view shows posts in chronological order, with the most recent posts being displayed at the top of the news feed. Users can also adjust what they see on their news feed in other ways through the ‘news feed preferences’ menu. There users can customize the types of content that appears on their news feed as well as hide content from specific users by ‘unfollowing’ them or prioritize content from other users by ‘following’ them (Hicks, 2010).

### **2.3.2 The Like Button**

On April 21<sup>st</sup> 2010 Facebook introduced the ‘Like’ button. Defined as a collaborative Web 2.0 platform, the ‘like’ button is located below user’s shared posts, ‘comments’, videos, etc. (Gamage, 2013). The button allows users to express their enjoyment and appreciation of status updates, comments, pictures and advertisements (Angwin, 2014). Companies also compete for users’ attention and want them to become actively engaged in their posts, i.e. to ‘like’ them and make ‘comments’. Thus, many companies use the number of ‘likes’ as an indicator of brand awareness and their level of success in building a network of followers (Loten *et al.*, 2014).

Since its inception the ‘like’ button has evolved beyond serving only as a tool to express enjoyment and appreciation. Companies and institutions can now add the ‘like’ button to their own websites. In fact, anyone can implement the like button by using a certain code which is available free of charge (Roosendaal, 2011). This means that Facebook users only have to click a single button and the piece of content they were reading will appear on Facebook’s news feed with a direct link back to the original website (Facebook, 2015-c).

Through the ‘like’ button, Facebook thus extended its social reach across the web, with 50,000 websites having installed the button in the first week it was available and at least 100,000 within a month (Parr, 2011). The ‘like’ button enables content providers to attract traffic to their websites as well as being a tool for users to add information to their personal profile sites, such as information about their interests. This is in tune with the purpose of social networking sites like Facebook which are made for users to share personal information (Roosendaal, 2011). Today the ‘like’ button can be found almost everywhere on the Internet and even websites of various institutions like hospitals and police stations feature it.

The 'like' button has some downsides, however. Since the number of 'likes' is usually a prediction of how popular the post is, it has caused social anxiety among some users. The more 'likes', the greater the social standing users appear to have. This is an especially popular view among the younger generation. According to the co-founder of CyberWise.org, Diana Graber, the number of 'likes' is translated by some into a direct sign of validation and attention. This has led many people to compete as to who is able to get the most 'likes' (Wallace, 2014).

Psychologist Anne Bjerre thinks that 'like' addiction is a growing problem. Heavy activity on social media can lead people to perceive that they constantly have to come up with something new and exciting in order to receive the approval of others. In the end this will become a crucial part of their evaluation of their own worth as individuals. In certain situations, when people get a stream of 'likes', a certain stimulation begins to affect the brain and cause happiness. The user feels socially accepted, and this causes euphoria (Thorisdottir, 2015).

### **2.3.3 The Share Button**

The 'Share' button was introduced shortly after Facebook membership was extended beyond universities in October 2006. The share button enables users to add a personalized message to links before sharing them on their timeline, in groups or to their friends through private messages (Facebook, 2015-d). Just as with the 'like' button, the 'share' button is used prominently among companies. In this regard, these two buttons have similar functionality; i.e., companies can spread their content on Facebook by adding the 'share' button to their web pages (Facebook, 2015-d). The main difference between the 'share' button and the 'like' button is that when the 'share' button is clicked, content appears both on users' news feeds as well on their personal profiles. Also, users can add a personalized message along with the content they are 'sharing'; this is something which the 'like' button does not offer (Facebook, 2015-d).

Many business owners count on users of social media sites such as Facebook to 'share' their content. There are various methods that websites can use to monitor whether their content is being 'shared'. By doing this business owners can obtain a measure of how popular their website is on social networking sites and, by extension, on the Internet as a whole. There are many scripts, plug-ins and applications that enable website developers to integrate the 'share' button into their websites. The source-code is free, as is in the case of the 'like'

button. Usually the 'share' button is placed at the bottom of a web page (Parsons, 2013). When a visitor clicks on the Facebook 'share' button for the first time, the number 1 appears next to the button. As more users 'share' the particular content, the higher the number becomes. Research has shown that the more often a page is 'shared', the more often others will 'share' it as well (Parsons, 2013).

#### **2.3.4 Comments**

On Facebook, 'Comments' are written expressions of opinions or reactions. Users can 'comment' on their friends' posted material, such as posts, pictures and videos (Facebook, 2015-e). There is no limit on how many 'comments' each user can make and users can post as many 'comments' as they like on the same post (Facebook, 2015-f).

Research has shown that the 'comment' feature is one of the primary educational tools on the site (Richardson, 2006). By 'commenting' on, responding to or criticizing other users' posts, users enhance their analytical, creative, instinctive and associational thinking. 'Commenting' online also encourages users to engage with views that are different from their own (Duffy, 2011). A survey from 2014 of users from the United States revealed that about 16% made at least one 'comment' every day, 11% at least a few a month and only 33% said they never made any 'comments' (Statista, 2015-b). On average, about 510 'comments' are posted on Facebook every 60 seconds (Zephoria, 2015).

#### **2.3.5 Friendship on Facebook**

Facebook 'Friends' are other users within the Facebook network with whom a user shares content. To make new 'friends' on Facebook a user needs to accept a request from another user or send one himself, which then has to be accepted by the other user. On each user's profile there is an 'Add Friend' button. By clicking on this button, the user sends another user a friend request which the recipient can choose to confirm or delete. By accepting the sender's request, that particular recipient will show up on the sender's Facebook friends list. By default, any user on Facebook can add any other user as a 'friend'. However, users have the option to change this (Facebook, 2015-g). The average Facebook user has around 130 'friends' (Evans, 2010).

Numerous studies have looked into the nature of 'friendship' between users on Facebook. Ellison *et al.* (2007) proposed that Facebook is mainly used to maintain existing offline relationships. Thus they believe that people usually do not befriend each other on Facebook

without having some kind of prior connection. It therefore seems more unusual for users to establish relationships on Facebook; Lampe *et al.* (2006), for example, found that Facebook users would rather search for people with whom they have some kind of an offline connection instead of browsing for strangers. Facebook and social networks therefore seem to have become an integral part of everyday modern relationships; research for example indicating that 91% of teenagers in the U.S. use social networking sites to maintain existing connections with friends (Lenhart & Madden, 2007).

In the cases where users do actually establish new relationships through Facebook, first impressions seem to dominate. Both males and females show more interest in becoming ‘friends’ with those users that they believe to have an attractive profile picture. Furthermore, users are more willing to become ‘friends’ with those who do not have any profile pictures than with those who they feel look unattractive in their display pictures (Wang *et al.*, 2010).

## **2.4 Pages**

‘Pages’ are a special kind of content within Facebook in that they are not associated with a specific user in the same sense as personal profiles. ‘Pages’ are nonetheless similar to user profiles in that it is possible to customize them in the same way as personal profiles. Thus it is possible to post status updates, upload photos and images, create events, add apps and more. However, the purpose of ‘pages’ is to represent businesses, brands, organizations, celebrities, etc., as opposed to individuals. Facebook offers its users six different categories to choose from when creating a business page:

- Local Business or Place
- Company, Organization or Institution
- Brand or Product
- Artist, Band or Public Figure
- Entertainment
- Cause or Community

### **2.4.1 Brand Fan Pages**

A ‘Brand Fan Page’, also known as a product or business fan page, is a way for businesses to establish their presence on Facebook and connect with target groups. Launched on November 6<sup>th</sup> 2007, more than 100,000 pages were made that same day. The average Facebook user is connected to around 80 Pages, events and groups (Evans, 2010).

Brand fan pages look similar to personal profiles although they offer various unique tools for businesses, such as detailed insights into the site analytics and access to Facebook Insights (Hof, 2007).

Facebook Insights is a tool created by Facebook which offers marketers a valuable metric about their performance and promotions on Facebook. Content such as access to data on activity, fan demographics, ad performance and trends are all made available on Facebook Insights. This makes marketers better equipped to improve their marketing strategy and reach their goals. Every business page has free access to Facebook Insights (Borthakur *et al.*, 2011). Businesses can start with a blank platform like regular users and then add all the content they want such as pictures and videos. However, developers independent of Facebook have created numerous applications intended to improve Facebook 'pages', such as by adding the ability to make reservations in the case of hotels and restaurants or the ability to buy tickets to various events (Facebook, 2007).

As mentioned before, in the case of personal Facebook pages, users request to be someone's 'friend' and then the recipient must approve the request. However, with brand fan pages, no confirmation is needed. When brand fan pages were launched in 2007, users simply engaged with the fan page by clicking the 'Become a fan' button. This was changed in April 2010 to a 'Like button' (Loomer, 2012). Liking a 'page' means that the user connects with that page, allowing them to receive updates from the page's administrator. 'Like' was chosen over the original 'Become a fan' button because it was thought of as a more inclusive term that encompasses the wide range of Facebook pages, many of which extend beyond brands (Facebook, 2010).

Users can share the content posted on a brand fan page with other users and also interact directly with the page by adding reviews, writing on the wall of the business page, uploading pictures, etc. These social actions among users are powerful in that they can be seen as trusted referrals by other users. Thus, when one user compliments a company for good service on its fan page, other users are more likely to take note and react more positively than they would in response to traditional advertising. It must be noted though, that this acts both ways; a user who leaves negative feedback on the fan page is more likely to arouse negative feelings. Therefore messages and posts by the company itself are not the most important component of a fan page, but rather the information that is shared on the page between the fans themselves (Facebook, 2007).

The popularity of fan pages can thus make a huge difference for a company's marketing strategy. They are a free and a relatively easy to maintain online presence which can quickly reach a large number of potential customers. For example, in October 2014 alone, nearly a billion people visited Facebook fan pages. Fan pages can also act as a way to keep up constant direct communication with a lot of customers all at once. Thus many businesses use fan pages in part as a customer service channel (Facebook, 2014).

#### **2.4.2 Fans**

'Fan' is the term used for a Facebook user who has 'liked' a brand fan page. Companies, celebrities, etc. compete to gather the most 'fans' on Facebook and it goes without saying that the more 'fans' a 'page' has, the more popular it will become. A larger number of 'fans' increase the exposure of any content generated by the page. More 'fans' also increase the likelihood that the algorithms on Facebook will suggest to users that are not yet 'fans' that they should 'like' the page (Chris, 2013).

Having the right 'fans' can also matter a lot. If pages are targeted at niche users and end up attracting the wrong type of user, the posts might not reach the original target group. This is due to the algorithms that govern which posts are displayed in a user's news feed. When a status update is posted, only the most loyal 'fans' of the fan page will receive it in their news feed. If those users then engage with it, only then will Facebook send the content out to more of the 'fans'. Thus, the more users who engage with a post, the more it will spread out amongst 'fans'. Therefore, if the fan page has a large base of 'fans' that do not really care for it, there is a risk that posts will not be sent out to the real 'fans', i.e., the ones who will actually engage with it. Due to this, usually only about 10-15% of the 'fans' will be exposed to any of the content generated by the page (Allert, 2014).

It is also expensive and time-wasting for a fan page to be sending out content to the wrong target group. Thus it is imperative that fan pages continuously monitor their fan demographics. Companies should strive to know things such as fans' location, gender and age. This will help to distinguish the 'fans' who engage with content and to determine if the content is actually reaching the target audience. By monitoring these statistics it is possible, for example, to see if the fan page needs to attract more women, younger people or any other group of customers the company in question may be interested in engaging (Loomer, 2013).

### 2.4.3 Boosted Posts

Facebook launched the ability to ‘Boost’ posts in May 2012. A ‘boosted’ post is a post posted on a brand fan page that, for a fee, appears higher in a user’s news feed than it otherwise would. The higher the payment, the more people the post will reach, meaning that the number of views the post receives will increase as time goes on (Facebook, 2015-h, -k; Grey, 2012).

It is possible to choose the target-group on whose news feeds the boosted post will show up. Facebook offers three target-group options: *users who have already liked your page*, *users who like your page and their friends* and *other users on Facebook*. Users can then be targeted with further refinement based on location, interests, age and gender. It is also possible to select how many days the ‘boosted’ post should run, the selection being from one up to seven days. After ‘boosting’ a post, the user can monitor its performance through Adverts Reporting, which helps businesses to realize the most important ad metrics and how they can reach their business goals (Facebook, 2015-i, -h).

Though ‘boosting’ posts has become a very popular activity among businesses, it has not been without controversy. Before the ‘boost’ feature was launched, posts by small business owners would have the same probability of being seen as those by bigger companies. Today however, Facebook has increased its effort to filter out unpaid promotional material in users’ news feeds. This has made it more difficult for small businesses and entrepreneurs to reach their ‘fans’ without resorting to paying for ‘boosted’ posts (Loten *et al.*, 2014).

The term usually used to describe the reach of posts which are not artificially boosted is ‘Organic reach’. ‘Paid reach,’ on the other hand, is the total number of unique users who have seen a post which has been ‘boosted’. Facebook made an announcement on April 23<sup>rd</sup> 2012 regarding organic reach and paid reach saying that brand fan pages organically reach about 16% of their ‘fans’ on average. Yet, this is not exclusive to business pages. The reach is similar between users and their friends. Users can miss content from their ‘friends’, just as they can miss content from fan pages, if they are not logged onto the site during the period when the posts are the most active in the news feed (Facebook, 2015-j; Facebook, 2012). Due to the ever-growing amount of content being shared daily by users, this problem is sure to increase in the future, barring any major changes being made to the way Facebook displays posts in the news feed.

During the early months of 2015, Facebook changed its policy on posts containing promotional content appearing on the news feed. Before this, it was possible to post promotional content without any cost on fan pages which would then appear on fans' news feeds. Now, however, only those posts which have been 'boosted' will appear on users' news feeds. According to a statement by Facebook, this change was intended to improve the relevance of the content which appears on the news feed and limit the number of posts which users are not interested in (Facebook, 2014). But what this means from a marketing perspective is that businesses which post promotional content on their fan pages should expect the organic distribution of posts to fall significantly. Thus, 'boosted' posts have become all the more important in ensuring that posted content actually reaches consumers.

### **3 Icelandair**

This chapter will give a quick overview of Icelandair, the types of service it provides, its humanitarian activities and its goals and objectives as regards social media marketing. The idea is to provide the reader with some background on Icelandair, so that the implications of the results which will follow in future chapters will be all the more clearer.

#### **3.1 Operations and Services**

Icelandair is the leading airline in Iceland and is headquartered at Reykjavik Airport in Reykjavik. It is owned by Icelandair Group, which focuses on the international airline and tourism sector. Icelandair is the market leader amongst airlines in Iceland and currently serves 39 gateways in Europe, the US and Canada. It builds its business strategy on the geographical location of Iceland, which, between Western Europe and the east coast of North America, offers various unique business opportunities (Icelandair, 2015-a).

Icelandair bases its flights on a 24-hour rotation system, with most flights leaving Iceland in the mornings and afternoons, and departing from others destinations during the day or night. Icelandair has a fleet of 21 aircraft, all of which are named after Icelandic volcanoes (Icelandair, 2015-a). In 2015 the number of passengers carried by the company is estimated to be around 2.9 million, which would mean an increase of about 300,000 compared to 2014 (Icelandair Group, 2014). Around 1,300 employees of various nationalities and ethnicities work for Icelandair and the employees are spread around ten different countries (Icelandair, 2015-b).

Icelandair's main service is to fly people between locations. Customers can choose between three travel classes. Economy class is the basic flight cabin; there, travelers receive the basic service such as the standardized leg-room, the in-flight entertainment system, and a selection of refreshment is offered for sale. Economy Comfort offers more service than Economy class. Customers enjoy greater leg-room, business check-in and lounge access, complimentary headphones, a complimentary meal and beverages, universal outlets, travel kits and more. The division that offers the highest level of service is Saga Class, with even more leg-room, check-in and lounge access, luxurious seats, noise-cancelling headphones, newspapers, hot towels, all meals and beverages free of charge and more. When booking with Icelandair, customers can buy tickets through the Internet. Icelandair's service centers are open 24/7, so tickets are available at any time, in addition to any support or assistance customers might need (Icelandair, 2015-d).

Saga Shop Collection is Icelandair's in-flight store, offering travellers various products such as perfumes, accessories, sweets and jewelry (Sagashop, 2015). Saga Shop Kitchen is Icelandair's in-flight refreshment shop where travellers can buy various meals and beverages during their flights (Icelandair, 2015-e). Numerous forms of entertainment content are also available to passengers during flights, such as personal in-flight entertainment centers, multi-channel stereo music and a selection of newspapers and magazines. Icelandair also offers customers access to the Internet through free Wi-Fi networks aboard its aircraft (Icelandair, 2015-f).

Saga Club is a reward program that plays a big part in Icelandair's service offerings. Members of Saga Club can collect club points every time they fly on scheduled Icelandair flights and also when they do business with one of Icelandair's partners; Air Domestic and Air Iceland. Members can use these points to buy goods in the Saga Shop Kitchen and Saga Collection Shop or to buy Saga Club gift certificates, book hotel accommodation or pay for car rentals. Customers can also upgrade to Saga Class or Economy Comfort with their award points (Icelandair, 2015-g).

### **3.2 Icelandair's Sponsorships**

Icelandair sponsors many events and charities. Together with Reykjavik City, Icelandair is the main sponsor of the popular Iceland Airwaves music festival held in Reykjavik each year across the first weekend in November. The festival lasts for five days, from Wednesday until Sunday. With an emphasis on introducing new artists and bands, it has become one of the leading music festivals in the world with thousands of people in attendance; amongst them many prominent journalists and high-ranking people from within the music industry (Iceland Airwaves, 2015)

Icelandair also sponsors various charities, most notably the Special Children's Travel Fund, which supports children with long-term illnesses and those who live under difficult circumstances. The fund was established in order to give children in Iceland and nearby countries an opportunity to travel abroad with their families. On every flight, Icelandair's crew members promote the fund and collect spare change from passengers who are willing to make a contribution (Icelandair, 2015-h). Icelandair also sponsors numerous sports associations; among them the National Olympic and Sports Association of Iceland, the Football Association of Iceland (FAI), the Icelandic Handball Federation (IHF), the Icelandic

Sports Association for the Disabled, the Golf Union of Iceland and the Icelandic Basketball Federation (Icelandair, 2015-i).

### **3.3 Icelandair's Goals and Objectives in Social Media Marketing**

Icelandair is a leader among airlines in Iceland in terms of social media use. Icelandair claims that its social media strategy reflects its business strategy in that the social media team is not excluded from other teams or divisions and is thus well aware of overall operations (Hákon Ágústsson, project manager at Icelandair, oral source, 2015). The fact that Icelandair is very active on the most prominent social platforms shows that the company obviously values customers' feedback. According to Icelandair, the company tries to think from the customers' point of view and to allow customers to help it to improve its use of social media.

Facebook and Twitter are the social media platforms which Icelandair utilizes the most, with dedicated employees constantly monitoring the activity on them. Icelandair's policy regarding Facebook is to use the platform to listen to what its customers are saying and respond in real time to any requests or concerns. The company has maintained a presence on Facebook since 2007 when brand fan pages were first launched and currently has over 235,000 'likes' (Hákon Ágústsson, project manager at Icelandair, oral source, 2015). Customer engagement is evident on Icelandair's brand fan page. The content is varied, and includes amongst other things flight change details, offers and entertainment content as well as customer travel photos and promotional videos (Icelandair, 2015-c).

The brand fan page is thus very active and consistently updated with posts in various languages. However, only the posts in each user's respective language will be shown on the news feed as the posts are set to target specific user segments. Icelandair's brand fan page offers apps and links to useful external pages, such as Icelandair's home page and a direct link to flight bookings. It also has links to Icelandair's Instagram and YouTube pages, which encourages a widespread audience across all platforms (Icelandair, 2015-c).

Icelandair's main strategy regarding social media involves utilizing them to attain customer engagement and create satisfaction. Its goals and objectives for social media are to create brand awareness and brand loyalty according to the mantra: *Refreshing Icelandic Travel Experience*. The company's stated main objectives are listed below (Hákon Ágústsson, project manager at Icelandair, email, 2015).

- *Be involved in positive two-way communication with customers.*
- *Create a proactive marketing tool, reactive listening tool and CRM tool.*
- *Increase revenues through specialized social media campaigns and connecting with offline campaigns.*
- *Help loyal and active fans to influence others.*
- *Increase the size and following of social networks at a quick but manageable pace.*
- *Drive traffic from social media to the company's own web and other channels.*
- *Assist customers by distributing helpful information.*
- *Take advantage of benefits of social media, such as consumer feedback.*
- *To improve other areas of Icelandair's operations such as pricing, route management, customer relations, marketing, on-board experience and web design.*

The results of this study can potentially shed some light on how far Icelandair has come in achieving these objectives. However, it must be kept in mind that this is not the explicit purpose of the study.

### **3.4 Research Questions**

The aim of this thesis is to empirically investigate what factors drive the popularity of Icelandair's official Facebook posts. While preliminary research has been conducted on the success of marketing activities on social media, there is limited knowledge about the factors that determine what posts become popular and which ones do not. Thus the project would also serve to further any research in this field.

The objective is to analyze all posts that Icelandair's brand page has published since it was started on Facebook. The posts will be analyzed according to the conceptual framework put forth by Vries, Gensler and Leeftang (2012) in the paper Popularity of Brand Posts on Brand Fan Pages: An investigation of the Effects of Social Media Marketing. In the thesis, an attempt will be made to answer the following questions:

1. What form of vividness should the content possess in order to appeal to
  - 1.1 Icelandic brand page fans?
  - 1.2 brand page fans in general?
2. What sort of interactive content should be posted on the Icelandair brand page so as to reach a higher level of online engagement with
  - 2.1 Icelandic brand page fans?
  - 2.2 brand page fans in general?

3. What brand post type is most popular on the Icelandair brand page with

3.1 Icelandic brand page fans?

3.2 brand page fans in general?

## **4 Literature Review**

Due to the enormous growth of social media, and especially Facebook, during the last decade, academics have shown an ever increasing interest in the subject. Sociologists, psychologists, anthropologists and even economists have written numerous papers and put forth many theories on what exactly it is that has driven this growth and then kept users hooked on Facebook. Ever on the forefront when it comes to big social developments, these developments have also not escaped the ever watchful eyes of marketers. Thus many businesses were quick to adapt Facebook to their marketing strategies and during the last few years there has been a growing stream of studies on the marketing potential of Facebook. This chapter aims to review some of this research and provide a theoretical overview of some of the ideas behind Facebook marketing today. First there will be a brief overview of social media marketing. The chapter following that will talk about brand communities and their importance to modern brand marketing practices. Afterwards, there will be a short review of content marketing, a relatively new concept and method. This will then lead to a chapter which reviews the research that has been done on the different types of posts posted to social networks, how they can be categorized, their features and the different effects they have on user engagement. Finally, the last chapter will talk about recent developments in the airline industry as well as how this has affected the approach of airlines to marketing.

### **4.1 Social Media Marketing**

The most popular definition of social media marketing is that by Kotler and Zaltman (1989). They define social media marketing as:

[S]ocial change management technology involving the design, implementation, and control of programs aimed at increasing the acceptability of a social idea or practice in one or more groups of target adopters. It utilizes concepts of market segmentation, consumer research, product concept development and testing, directed communication, facilitation, incentives, and exchange theory to maximize the target adopter's response.

Today's definition is considerably different however, as rapid technological changes have caused social media to evolve enormously. Today, social media marketing might be described more as a process that enables individuals and companies to promote their websites, products and services through online social channels. The goal of social media marketing today is thus to produce content that users will share with their social network to

help increase brand exposure and broaden customer reach (Weinberg, 2009; Investopedia, 2015).

Mangold and Faulds (2009) have argued that social media marketing should be looked at as a mixture of traditional promotion and social promotion. The latter term is unique to social marketing and involves promotion through consumer to consumer communication, for example by word-of-mouth. Thus, business use traditional promotional material to reach customers and then through social promotion they encourage those customers to share and promote the product or brand within their own social networks. This will hopefully lead to increased brand awareness amongst the target group, both online and offline. As such, social media marketing can be thought of as being a new form of traditional word-of-mouth principles.

This mixing of traditional promotion and social promotion has led to a more diverse set of tools for marketers. Furthermore, research has shown that marketers have extensively integrated social media into their traditional marketing activities (Stelzner, 2014). At the same time, according to research by Vollmer and Precourt (2008), consumers are more and more turning away from the traditional marketing, that is, print, broadcast, direct mail, and the telephone. Thus, today's marketers are buying less and less media and instead they are becoming the media themselves (Lieb, 2012). That is, since much less cost goes into advertising nowadays, companies can create their own Facebook account, Twitter account, YouTube account and so on. Marketers today do not need to rely on other companies, such as radio stations and TV stations, to disseminate their content. The transformation has gone from one-way interactions where customers were only fed with information, to a two-way interaction where customers can take part in the process.

Companies can benefit in many ways by integrating social media marketing into their marketing activities. Social media can increase brand awareness, and encourage customer relationships (Armellini and Villanueva, 2011). Moreover, social marketing can also enhance brand equity as well as marketing communications, and these factors can have an effect on purchase intention (Kim and Ko, 2011). Furthermore, market research indicates that firms that use social media in their marketing activities increase the number of visits to their websites, identify new business opportunities, create brand communities (this is further described here below) and also receive feedback from their customers (Breslauer and Smith, 2009). Finally, social media marketing can also enhance word-of-mouth marketing, (oral or

written recommendation by a satisfied customer to potential future customers) (Michaelidou *et al.*, 2011).

Therefore, social media marketing is predicted to become a large part of marketing in the future (Harris and Rae, 2009; Mangold and Faulds, 2009). The growth of social media marketing may also lead to the increased importance of ‘customer engagement’, the term for when delighted or loyal customers share their delight or loyalty in interactions with others in their social networks and become advocates for a product, brand, or company (Sashi, 2012).

## **4.2 Brand Communities**

The term ‘brand community’ originated in a paper written by Muniz and O’Guinn (1995) presented at the Annual Conference of the Association for Consumer Research. Later, in another paper, Muniz and O’Guinn (2001) further defined the concept as “a specialized, non-geographically bound community, based on a structured set of social relations among admirers of a brand”. They also argued that brand communities differ from more traditional communities since they are formed around a branded good or a service. Just like other communities, though, they have their own shared consciousness, rituals, traditions and sense of moral responsibility. Brand communities can play a large role in defining the image of the brand. Since the community can come to represent the buyers of a particular good or service, the attitude outsiders have towards community members can become synonymous with their attitude towards the brand.

If at all possible, it could therefore be wise of marketers to try to foster or influence brand communities in some ways. A loyal brand community can quickly make even a small brand successful. Because of this, marketers have increasingly begun to try to create communities around their brands. This has usually been done through social media campaigns or by providing some kind of interactive online platform which simplifies communication between buyers and potential buyers (Salvy and Suprpto, 2014).

Originally brand communities were few and far between but with the advent of the Internet they became almost commonplace. The evolution of social media has further increased the number of communities. Social media have also made it easier than ever before for businesses to communicate directly with brand communities. Brand communities can thus create new ways for businesses to communicate with their customers. Community leaders can serve as spokesmen for the community as a whole, which can both facilitate communication

and make it possible to better adjust the product to the preference of users (Gummerus *et al.*, 2012).

Laroche *et al.* (2012) found that brand communities established on social media had positive effects on community markers (i.e., shared consciousness, shared rituals and traditions, and obligations to society). These community markers then also had positive effects on value creation and brand equity. Gummerus *et al.* (2012) studied the relationship between customer behavioral engagement, relationship benefits, satisfaction and loyalty in the context of Facebook brand communities. They found that entertainment benefits, or rather the fun customers have while partaking in community activities, were the most effective in stimulating further participation in brand communities. Social and economic benefits, on the other hand, were found to have a negative influence on consumers' incentives to join brand communities. This result is revealing since it suggests that focusing on competitions or lotteries of some kind is not the best way to attract new users to a site or community.

Another interesting result from Gummerus *et al.* was that entertaining customers was more important for retaining their connection with a brand community than social activities. Thus being entertained was more important than, for example, getting to know other members of the community or helping the community in some way. Gummerus *et al.* thus argue that most customers do not participate in the community directly but rather use the community as a source of information about a product or brand. A few very active buyers or users therefore seem to make up the backbone of most brand communities. This again reinforces the importance of those brand community leaders since, apparently, they both create most of the content and act as the representatives of the user base as a whole.

Being too involved in the activities of brand communities can backfire, though. Lee *et al.* (2011) found that often, consumers can easily start to associate marketing efforts and the active management of brand communities with exterior motives. This devalues the sense of community, since businesses are not perceived as wanting to strengthen or foster the community but rather as seeking to exploit community members in order to increase profits. Lee *et al.* believe that due to this, businesses might be better off leaving brand communities to their own ends. Thus, they might offer the platforms that make the community possible but beyond that should avoid getting too involved in the activities of the community. However, this means that businesses will lose the ability to monitor and affect the types of content generated by the community. Due to the tendency of outsiders to view brand communities

and the brands themselves as synonymous to some extent, this could end up reflecting badly on the brand itself.

### **4.3 Content Marketing**

Content Marketing Institutions (2015) define ‘content marketing’ as:

“[A] strategic marketing approach focused on creating and distributing valuable, relevant, and consistent content to attract and retain a clearly defined audience, and ultimately, to drive profitable customer action.”

Marketing and publishing professionals have used a number of terms through time to describe the concept of brands projecting an image in order to attract and retain customers, such as custom publishing, custom media, branded content, corporate media and branded media. In practice, content marketing is thus far from being something new to marketing professionals. For example, businesses have been publishing newsletters and film strips with informative content for decades. However the concept of content marketing and the increased emphasis on integrating it into the overall marketing strategy is relatively new (Lieb, 2012).

Today, business of all kinds are adapting and learning how to create effective content. A study conducted by the Business Marketing Association and American Business Media, in conjunction with MarketingProfs and Junta42 (2010), surveyed 1,100 marketers in North America. It found that 9 out of 10 businesses across all industries and companies, large and small, were incorporating content marketing into the marketing mix. On average, they were spending a quarter of their marketing budgets on content, and over half said they planned to increase investment in the coming year.

Content marketing aids in brand recognition, trust, authority, credibility, loyalty, and authenticity. Content marketing can help accomplish these tasks on several levels: for the organization it represents, for a company’s products and services, and for the employees who represent the business or service. Content marketing also generates natural inbound links and builds up good content on the company website that will be detected by search engines. Furthermore, content marketing creates value and helps people. It answers questions and provides foundational information. It makes customers and clients more educated and informed (Rowley, 2008; Steimle, 2014).

Lieb (2012) describes several types of content, including ‘entertaining’, ‘informative’ and ‘promotional’ content. She argues that ‘entertaining’ content is the most important, as people tend not to remember facts and figures but they do usually remember content that is engaging, intriguing and memorable. She also argues that today the Internet is the place where people go to look for this kind of content.

Social media have therefore had a significant effect on content marketing. They have lowered the bar and the costs of leveraging content to profitably attract clients and prospects. Channels such as Facebook, YouTube and Twitter offer both a free and convenient way to distribute content. These channels can thus remove many of the hard cost barriers that were once a mandatory part of creating effective content. Paper, printing, shipping, etc. are no longer needed. However, although content marketing may be cheaper thanks to digital innovations, this means that there is more competition for the attention of consumers. Consistently delivering quality content to a target audience is thus more important than ever and this can require much work, originality, strategy, experimentation and persistence (Lieb, 2012).

#### **4.4 Effectiveness of Different Types of Content**

Cvijikj and Michahelles (2011) evaluated the effects of post characteristics on the level of interaction within a Facebook page. For this, they divided post characteristics into groups by three criteria: media type, content type, and posting day. They then measured the interaction level through the number of comments and ‘likes’ on individual posts and the ‘interaction duration’. Their results established that content types positively influence the number of ‘likes’ and ‘comments’ as well as ‘interaction duration’. Furthermore, photos caused the greatest level of ‘interaction’, followed by status updates and links.

In another study, Cvijikj and Michahelles, this time also joined by Spiegler, repeated the former study on the effect of the post characteristics (Cvijikj, Spiegler & Michahelles, 2011). This time they studied over 14 Facebook brand fan pages during a period of four months. The goal of the study was to confirm the previous findings, which were produced using data from only a single Facebook brand fan page. The idea was to make it possible to generalize the previously obtained results. The study found that content type had an effect on all three interaction measures, that is, ‘likes’, ‘comments’ and ‘interaction duration’. Status posts caused the greatest number of ‘comments’, while videos caused the most ‘likes’. Photos and links led to the least ‘interaction’ in both cases. These results differ compared to the previous

findings where photos were the source of greatest ‘interaction’ for all three measures. Cvijikj *et al.* claim that the difference is partly due to the fact that in the previous study, video posts were not present in the dataset, resulting in incomplete results. Nonetheless, the results from both studies highlight the fact that different post characteristics cause different effect on the level of user interaction.

Additionally, research done by Chauhan and Pillai (2013) on customer engagement in relation to Indian brand fan pages shows similar results. Post characteristics were divided into groups by the same three criteria: media type, content type and posting day/time. This study also found that media type and content type had a significant impact on the number of ‘likes’ and ‘comments’.

Rohm and Kaltcheva (2013) propose five categories of content that maximize user engagement. These are: ‘entertainment’, ‘brand engagement’ (specifically identification with or connection to the brand), ‘timeliness of information and service responses’, ‘product information’ and ‘incentives and promotions’. Rohm and Kaltcheva reached this conclusion by studying the interaction of young consumers with brand fan pages. Thus, these five classes represent individuals’ motives for interacting and engaging with brands via social media platforms such as Facebook. Although the sample was composed of only younger users, these results strengthen the idea that it is possible to classify content types and that different types of content will have different effects on consumers.

Ryan, Peruta and Chouman (2013) analyzed the way companies communicate on social media and how brands (randomly chosen brands) interact with customers through Facebook. One of the main objectives of their paper was to identify the nature of the content posted by companies on social media. Their research indicates that 90% of posts were of the content types ‘special promotions’, ‘product promotions’ and ‘brand-related’, while only a small amount of the posts were categorized as ‘contests and events’. Furthermore, there were only small variances in the types of the content posted, with much of it being typical promotional messages or advertisements. Ryan *et al.* argue that this might indicate that companies have focused more on promoting their brands through Facebook and less on customer interaction. Therefore businesses might not be posting a big enough variety of content on brand fan pages.

In fact, Hong (2011) has researched the motivations users have for communicating with brand fan pages and strongly emphasizes the need for entertaining content. Hong further argues that if the structure of the brand fan page is too information-heavy this could result in it failing to meet user's expectations and not creating user engagement. Moreover, users favor communicating with other 'fans' on the business page rather than with representatives of the business itself. In addition many users found following conversations on business Facebook Pages more entertaining than participating in these conversations.

Shen and Bissell (2013) study of the social media tools and post characteristics most frequently used on Facebook, established the importance of entertaining content even further. Their findings indicate that the most popular and engaging post type available to businesses is entertainment content. Promotional content, on the other hand, does not seem to appeal as much to consumers. Furthermore Shen and Bissell believe entertainment content can be used to gather more information about target groups, for example by asking consumers to answer amusing questions or questioners. Thus they conclude that entertainment content is the way towards maximizing the profits of any investment in social marketing, rather than just pure promotional content. To a large extent Swani *et al.*, (2013) reach the same conclusions. They investigated which content type strategies were the most likely to promote online "word-of-mouth" in the form of the number of 'likes' for business-to-business/business-to-consumer and for product/service Facebook accounts. The findings suggest that business-to-business account posts are more effective if they include corporate brand names and avoid "hard sell" or explicitly commercial statements.

Gaber and Wright (2014) explored the factors that affect young Egyptian consumers' attitudes towards fast food advertising on Facebook. Most of the posts they analyzed fell into the 'informative' category, followed by 'entertainment', then 'incentive' and finally those which included 'engaging' content. The posts that appealed most to consumers (in terms of number of 'shares' and 'likes') were those that contained 'incentive' content and the second most popular were posts containing 'entertaining' content. It can therefore be assumed that 'incentive' posts that have the purpose of encouraging users to buy certain meals or click on a certain advertisement, or simply encourage fans to perform some action, are likely to initiate consumer interaction. At the same time though, Gaber and Wright's results also further reinforce the notion that 'entertaining' posts are among the most popular in terms of consumer engagement.

Al-Mu'ani *et al.* (2014) investigated how Jordanian telecommunication companies in the mobile sector engage with their 'fans' on Facebook. The content types that 'fans' were found to engage with the most were 'giveaways' and 'questions'. However the engagement rate was the lowest for 'societal' posts. 'Giveaways' are similar to 'incentive' posts in that the goal is to encourage 'fans' to engage with the posts.

In 2012, Cvijikj published a new study building on the previous two publications from 2011 (Cvijikj, 2012). There she analyzed customer engagement on over 100 Facebook brand pages in the food and beverage industry. She found that posts referring to the 'current number of fans' on the brand fan page, 'engagement boosters' and 'advertisements' were the most popular content types. Furthermore, 'fans' were also more likely to interact with posts which were posted on weekdays rather than those which were posted during weekends. In 2013 Cvijikj and Michahelles repeated the 2012 study, only this time they changed the content categories used for the analysis (Cvijikj & Michahelles, 2013). Their results showed that providing 'entertaining' and 'informative' content significantly increases the level of engagement. In addition, 'fans' positively react to content offering 'remuneration' but only in a form of 'comments'. Furthermore, the results showed that vividness (i.e. photos, links and videos) increased the level of engagement while interactivity (i.e. link and videos) decreased the level of engagement. Finally, posts created on weekdays increase the level of 'comments', while posting in peak hours will reduce the level of engagement.

Research by Vries, Gensler and Leeftang (2012), however, indicates the opposite. Their research on what factors drive brand post popularity on social media networking sites displays that 'entertaining' content has a negative effect on the number of 'likes' but no effect on the number of 'comments'. Vries *et al.* also found that interactivity (i.e. questions) had a negative relation to the number of 'likes' but positive relation to the number of 'comments' which is in stark contrast the results of the papers by Cvijikj and Michahelles. This difference in results may, however, be in part due to the various interpretations and operationalization of the concepts used to categorize posts. Vries *et al.* have a slightly different definition of 'entertainment' content, defining it as content that is not related to the brand. Therefore, the negative relation could be because fans are more interested in the brand itself.

Furthermore, Smith (2014) used the same conceptual framework as put forth by Vries *et al.* (2012) to assess brand post popularity. Smith's results indicated that the most popular Facebook posts included 'entertaining' content, such as funny movies or pictures, which was usually unrelated to the brand. This supports the argument of Hong and others that brand fan

pages must not be too information-heavy and that consumers need content they can identify with. As for posts that users were most likely to ‘share’, those that were related to some type of contests or product giveaways were the most popular, supporting the results of Gaber and Wright as well as Al-Mu’ani. The least popular Facebook posts were those that were neutral, i.e., neither ‘entertaining’ nor ‘informative’, and neither vivid nor interactive.

Table 1  
*Post Type Categorization in the Literature*

Author	Year	Post types	Media	Other	Engagement
Cvijikj & Michahelles	2011	Product(s) announcement Information Designed question Questioner Competition Advertisement Statement	Photo Video Link Status	Weekday	Like Comment ID
Hong	2011	Entertainment Information Promotional Social			Like Comment
Cvijikj	2012	Advertisement Engagement booster Story Contest Announcing number of fans Facebook app	Photo Video Link Status	Weekday Hour of day	Like Comment ID
Vries <i>et al.</i>	2012	Entertainment Information	Photo Video Link Voting Call to act Contest Question	Weekday Position Valence of comm.	Like Comment
Cvijikj & Michahelles	2013	Entertainment Information Remuneration	Photo Video Link Status	Weekday Peak hours	Like Comment Share
Rohm and Kaltcheva	2013	Timeliness Product information Entertainment Brand engagement Incentives / Promotion			
Ryan <i>et al.</i>	2013	Event Contest Special promotion Product promotion Brand related	Photo Video Text Link Poll		Like Comment Share

*Post Type Categorization in the Literature cont.*

Shen & Bissell	2013	Events Product Promotion Entertainment	Poll Q&A Survey Rewards Apps Other	Like Comment
Swani <i>et al.</i>	2013	Corporate brand names Emotional content Promotion		Like
Chauhan & Pillai	2013	College Alumni news Existing student news Business news Education industry news General engagement	Hour of day Weekday	Like Comments
Al-Mu'ani <i>et al.</i>	2014	Giveaways National holidays Societal Product relation Questions	Photo Video Text Link	Like Comments Share
Gaber and Wright	2014	Information Engagement Entertainment Incentive content		Like Share

## 4.5 Media Types

Media types indicate how users can interact with the different posts that brand fan page moderators post on Facebook. When users/moderators share content on Facebook, they can choose to add text, links, pictures and/or videos to the post. This means that posts can be categorized by how much interactivity or vividness they exhibit.

### 4.5.1 Interactivity

Interactivity has been defined as “the degree to which two or more communication parties can act on each other, on the communication medium, and on the messages and the degree to which such influences are synchronized” (Liu and Shrum, 2002). Levels of interactivity vary across media, some media being much more interactive than others (Kioussis, 2002). Today interactivity has become largely associated with new communication technologies and the Internet, users being able to react to and interact with online content more than ever before.

Social media are based on interactions between users and as such are heavily interactive. Whilst traditional media rely on one-directional transmission, social media are based on two-way communications (Mayfield, 2008). The posts on social media websites do, however, differ in interactivity. For example, a post which includes some kind of question posed to the reader is more likely to elicit a reaction than a post which includes only a simple statement. A post that includes a link would also count as being more interactive, since the reader would be motivated to click on the link and thus to react, in a way, to the posted content.

Cho and Lee (2011) found that interactivity increased users' perceived value of their social media activities. The more interactive content users engaged with, the more they felt that they were participating in something meaningful. Coyle and Thorson (2001) tested whether increased interactivity changed users' attitude towards a website. Their results indicated that more interactivity resulted in users feeling more like a part of the website as opposed to being just visitors. At the same time, users also developed a more positive attitude towards those websites which were more interactive and were more likely to keep on visiting these websites.

#### **4.5.2 Vividness**

At the start of the century, advances in Internet technology and bandwidth limits started to allow for 'richer' media. This meant that it was now possible to integrate sounds, pictures and even full motion videos into websites to a far greater extent than before (Hansell, 1998). Now, more than a decade later, the possibilities are even more numerous. Today it only takes seconds for most computers to load up high-resolution videos and most websites include all sorts of bandwidth-heavy content. Most of this content is what could be described as being vivid.

Steuer (1992) defines vividness as being related to the breadth and depth of a message. 'Breadth' here means the number of sensory dimensions being stimulated by the content. Thus, how much breadth the content exhibits depends upon factors such as whether it has sound, moving pictures, color, etc. Depth means the quality of the content and the resolution in which it is presented. Vividness is sometimes mistakenly thought to have the same or similar meaning as interactivity. The terms do differ substantially, however; for example, interactivity always involves two-way communication while vividness need not necessarily do so. A television broadcast can be highly vivid, but at the same time it would usually not be particularly interactive (Rafaeli, 1998; Steuer, 1992). Just as in the case of interactivity, social media content varies in the level of vividness it exhibits. For example users can include

videos and pictures and also add animations in their posts on Facebook. Fortin and Dholakai (2005) found that web-based advertisements were more effective when they included highly vivid content. According to Coyle and Thorson (2001), high vividness can lead users to develop more positive attitudes towards websites. Higher vividness was also found to increase users' sense of immersion and motivate them to visit the websites more often.

#### **4.6 Marketing and the Airline Industry**

Over the last two decades the airline industry has changed tremendously. The market dominance of the traditional carriers has largely disintegrated as a result of the onslaught of new low-cost carriers. Furthermore, the SARS epidemic in Asia and the 9/11 terrorist attack in New York have transform the industry beyond recognition. Thus, nowadays consumers are very price-conscious and many airlines are burdened by the increased regulations governing airline security (Jarach, 2004). This has meant that marketing has become more important to the industry than ever before. Airlines without an active marketing strategy run the risk of not being able to differentiate themselves sufficiently from competitors. Since competition amongst airlines is heavy this can quickly lead them to lose customers and possible profits or even go bankrupt.

This is supported by Martín-Consuegra and Esteban (2007), who have found that those airlines that focus more on marketing perform better overall than those that do not. A direct result of the changes the airline industry has gone through, is the difference in attitude consumers have towards airlines. As an example of this, Teichert *et al.* (2008) found that the traditional segmentation of airline customers into business and economy classes seems to have become obsolete. Their research instead pointed towards there now being three factors which can segment the customer base. Thus, customers differed in the amount of comfort they desired, some being not concerned with comfort at all while others put great emphasis on being able to travel comfortably. Customers also differed in their concern for the efficiency of airlines, that is, how quickly they allowed them to get from one place to the next. Finally, they also varied by how price-conscious they were. This means that the traditional way of targeting business clients by offering increased comfort or even luxury might not be as effective as it once was. Furthermore, private consumers might also have other preferences than they used to have before, some valuing cost beyond efficiency, for example.

Another change, mainly brought about by the increased competition from low-cost carriers, is the increased emphasis by many traditional airlines on service quality. This is in part in order to be able to keep on charging premium prices, something these airlines need because of the way traditional airlines were structured before the advent of the low cost carriers. However, research has shown that this greater focus on service quality has not necessarily brought about an actual, or at least sufficient, increase in service quality. Ostrowski *et al.* (1993) examined perceived service quality amongst the customers of two American airlines and found that in both cases service quality did not meet expectations. Furthermore, customer loyalty was low in the case of both airlines.

Another study by Sum Chau *et al.* (2009) used the popular SERVQUAL framework to analyse the perceived service quality of various airline customers in both London and Taipei. They found that, overall, customers felt that airlines were not able to close the fifth SERVQUAL gap, meaning that actual service quality fell short of customer expectations. Increased competition amongst airlines has also meant that the airline industry has become quick to adopt new marketing methods. Thus, the industry started embracing the Internet relatively early and today it would be hard to find an airline which does not offer its customers the ability to purchase tickets and services online.

Many airlines have also increasingly begun to shift the majority of their pre-flight customer interactions online. Check-ins now usually happen online, the airlines send all notifications through email instead of calling by phone and any enquiries or questions are usually answered more quickly online than they would be by phone or in person. Although airlines have thus been early adopters of Internet technology and continue to lead the market in terms of these developments, the transition has not been perfect.

In many cases the implementation of electronic systems or online communications has been poor or misguided. For example, Tsai *et al.* (2011) examined a number of factors related to the effectiveness of web-based marketing amongst airlines. They found that, although the web presence of most airlines has grown a lot, there are still many inefficiencies to be found in the way airlines utilize the web to market themselves. These inefficiencies included not having enough direct links to information on different products and services on their own websites as well as the websites not being responsive enough. Overall, Tsai *et al.* concluded that airlines were not utilizing the Internet to its full extent in terms of marketing. It is therefore obvious that there is an ongoing shift in the way that the airline industry works. Competition is becoming fiercer, consumers are becoming more conscious about prices and

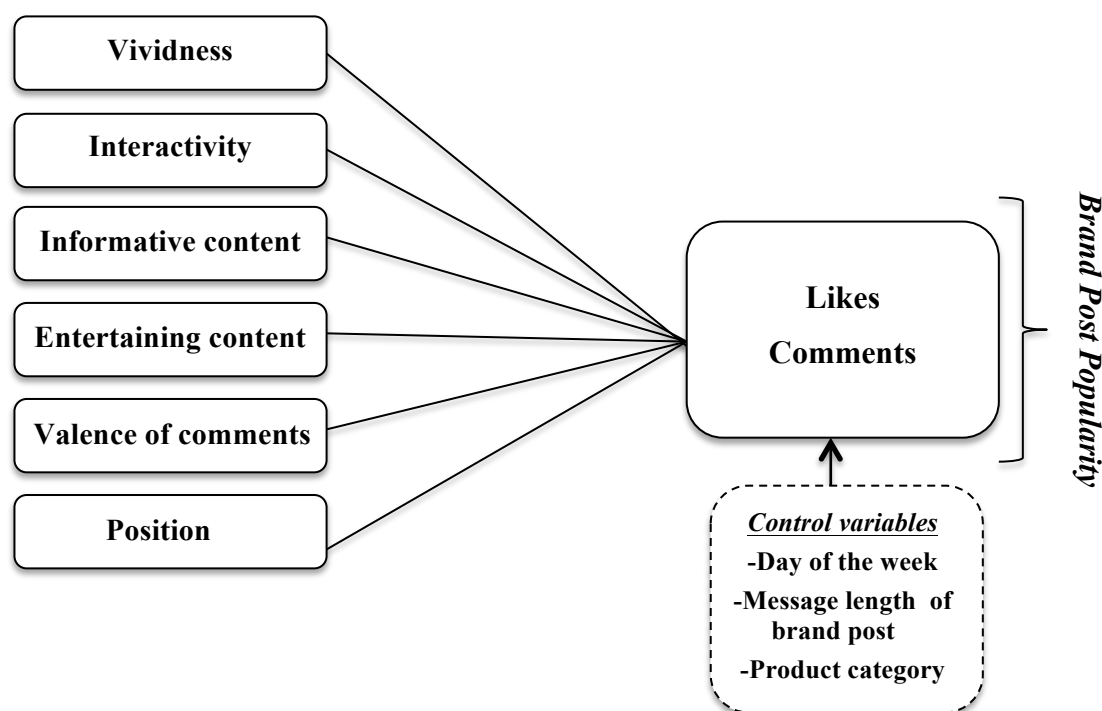
service quality and the importance of good marketing is increasing. Although airlines were amongst the first adopters of Internet-based technologies for use in marketing and have been on the forefront ever since, there still seems to be a lot of room for improvement in the way these activities are handled.

## 5 Study Design

This study will utilize a conceptual framework put forth by Vries, Gensler and Leeftang (2012). However, the framework will be modified somewhat in order to better account for the specific circumstances of Icelandair.

### 5.1 Conceptual Framework

Vries, Gensler and Leeftang designate brand post popularity as the number of ‘likes’ and the number of ‘comments’ on a brand post. Their conceptual framework consists of six determinants which influence the popularity of posts. These determinants are vividness, interactivity, ‘informative’ and ‘entertainment’ content, the position of a brand post on the brand fan page, and at lastly the valence of the comments on the brand post. When using this model to estimate the effects of each determinant on the popularity of posts they also use the following control variables: the day of the week the post was posted, the message length of the brand post and the product category of the brand post.



*Figure 1* Conceptual framework from “Popularity of Brand Posts on Brand Fan Pages: An Investigation of the Effects of Social Media Marketing”, by Vries et al., 2012, Journal of Interactive Marketing.

For the first two factors of the framework, vividness and interactivity, Vries *et al.* identified four different levels of intensity (none, low, medium and high). These four levels also correspond to previous research by Coyle and Thorson (2001) and Fortin and Dholakia (2005). Here three levels of interactivity and vividness are used; these are described in Table 2.

Table 2  
*Operationalizations of Vivid and Interactive Brand Post Characteristics*

Level	Vividness	Interactivity
<b>Low</b>	<b>Picture</b>  (photo or image)	<b>Link to a website</b> (mainly to news sites or blogs, but never to the company website)
		<b>Voting</b> (brand fans are able to vote for alternatives (e.g., Which taste or design they think is best))
<b>Medium</b>	<b>Event</b>  (application at the brand page and announces an upcoming (offline) event of the brand)	<b>Call to act</b>  (urges brand fans to do something (e.g., go to certain website, ‘liking’ or ‘commenting’))
		<b>Contest</b> (brand fans are requested to do something (e.g. Tweet or like a website) for which they can win prizes)
<b>High</b>	<b>Video</b>  (mainly videos from YouTube)	<b>Question</b>
		<b>Quiz</b> (similar to question, but now brand fans can win prizes)

The next two factors include the content of the brand posts, i.e., ‘informative’ and ‘entertaining’ content. Vries *et al.* define ‘informative’ content as information about the company/brand and/or its products. ‘Entertaining’ brand posts, on the other hand, contain content that is not related to the brand, such as funny movies or anecdotes. However, some posts do not fall under either category and are therefore used as base categories in their analysis. The last two factors in the framework are ‘positioning’ and the ‘valence of comments’. The ‘valence of comments’ refers to the number of positive, neutral and negative ‘comments’ on a brand post. Vries *et al.* computed the ratio of positive, neutral and negative ‘comments’ to the total number of ‘comments’ per brand post. The share of neutral ‘comments’ is used as a base category in their analysis. At last, ‘position’ indicates the position of the brand post by the number of days the brand post is on top of the brand fan page.

## 5.2 Modified framework

For this thesis, the conceptual framework of Vries, Gensler and Leeflang has been modified and adjusted to the posts of Icelandair. The reason for this is that the posts on Icelandair's fan page do not match the categorization of the framework fully. There are very few posts that would be considered 'entertaining' posts as described by Vries *et al.* Icelandair's brand fan page also includes a disproportionate amount of posts that would be considered as 'informative'. The objectives and goals of Icelandair's social media strategy are, as mentioned above, to assist their customers by regularly handing out helpful information and thus create a proactive marketing tool. This accounts for the high number of 'informative' posts, which include information of various types on flight destinations, flight updates and the latest offers and promotions.

Thus, posts will be categorized as 'entertainment', 'information', 'social' and 'promotional' posts instead of only 'entertainment' and 'informative' posts as in the analysis by Vries *et al.* This means that two post types have been added to the framework: 'social' and 'promotional' content. The 'social' post type was added to the framework since many of the posts on Icelandair's fan page involve social content such as social events, sport events, open questions to fans regarding daily activities and humanitarian work.

Furthermore, many posts on the Icelandair's brand fan page involve various offers, marketing campaigns, Facebook games and contests. All this content can be considered as promotion, the purpose of promotions being to generate sales and to create customer awareness of the service they provide. A lot of the posts that can be found on Icelandair's brand page and would be categorized as 'informative' posts according to Vries *et al.* are in fact posts informing customers of sales and promotions. Thus it was decided that these posts should instead fall into a separate category, 'promotion', particularly in view of how different their topics are from those of Icelandair's other 'informative' posts.

Regarding media types, i.e., vividness and interactivity, some of the levels of intensity, as indicated in Table 2 have been skipped. In the table, vividness consists of three levels: low vividness (picture), medium vividness (event) and high vividness (video). Since Icelandair posted no Facebook 'events' the medium vividness level was removed for the purpose of this analysis, leaving the other two levels. As for interactivity, there are also three levels: low interactivity (link) and (voting), medium interactivity (call to act) and (contest), and finally high interactivity (question) and (quiz).

Since ‘voting’, ‘contest’ and ‘quiz’ hardly came up in the posts on Icelandair’s fan page it was decided to skip these levels. Furthermore, in the case of the low interactivity level ‘link’ the ‘links’ should only include those not directed to a company’s own website. In most cases, the ‘links’ posted on Icelandair’s brand webpage were ones that linked directly to its home page. Only in the few other select cases where the ‘links’ were directed to other homepages were the posts categorized as including a ‘link’.

The ‘valence of comments’ variable has been removed from the framework. The reason for this is that it proved hard to evaluate whether ‘comments’ were positive or negative. In fact most of them had both some negative as well as positive aspects. Thus instead of falling into the trap of the analysis becoming too qualitative it was deemed easier just to remove the variable from the framework. The ‘position’ of the posts on the brand fan page was also removed from the framework and will instead be used as a control variable. This was done since the focus is on determining the effects of post categories on popularity and as such the effect of their position is not of primary interest here.

Furthermore, in addition to ‘likes’ and ‘comments’ as indicators of brand posts popularity, ‘shares’ have also been added. ‘Shares’ have the important role of allowing users themselves to distribute content across the network. In addition, the fact that a post is ‘shared’ by a user clearly shows that the user finds the content interesting or ‘likes’ it. The more often a post is ‘shared’ the more popular it thus must be amongst users.

In regards to the control variables, ‘product category’ was removed since Icelandair only offers one type of service and it is thus not applicable to this analysis. However, two additional control variables were added instead, ‘boost’ and ‘fans’. ‘Boost’ indicates whether Icelandair has paid for the post to appear higher in a user’s news feed or on the news feed of non-fans. ‘Boost’ will therefore inevitably have an effect on how many ‘likes’, ‘comments’ and ‘shares’ each post gets. The last control variable, ‘fans’, is the number of fans Icelandair had at the time each post was posted. Since the number of fans plays a large part in determining how many people will see the post, it is obviously positively related to the number of ‘likes’, ‘comments’ and ‘shares’ it receives. In Figure 2 the modified framework is shown.

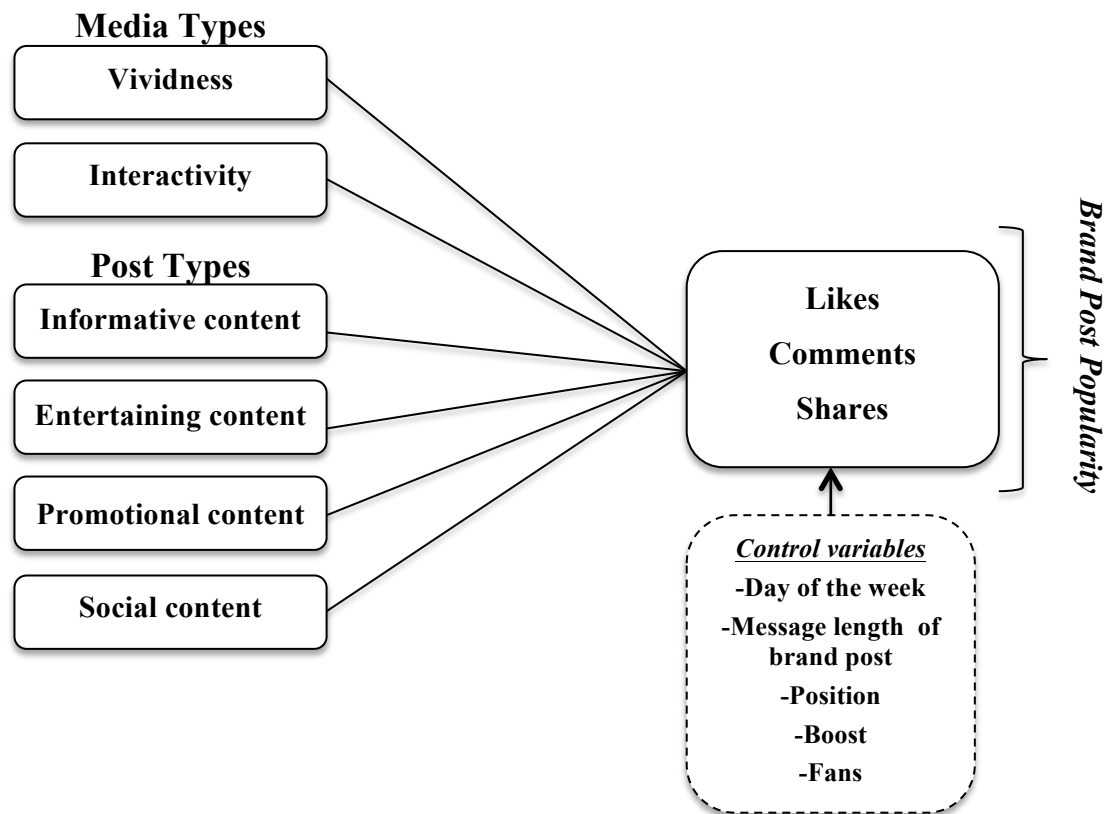


Figure 2 Modified framework by Vries et al. 2012.

## 5.3 Methodology

### *Data*

The data used for the analysis was composed of the posts, and their comments, posted on Icelandair's brand fan page during the period January 7<sup>th</sup> 2011 to January 29<sup>th</sup> 2015. In total there were 242 posts of varying length and content.

Information about the number of 'fans' at the time each post was posted was also collected using Facebook's 'Insights' feature. However there was no data available on the number of 'fans' before July 17<sup>th</sup> 2011. Thus the number of 'fans' between January 7<sup>th</sup> 2011 and July 17<sup>th</sup> 2011 had to be estimated. This was done by calculating the mean daily growth of 'fans' over the second half of 2011 and then assuming the growth had been the same over the first half of the year. For the control variable 'boost', the author could not see how much Icelandair paid for each 'boost', only if Icelandair did 'boost' the post or not. Thus a dummy variable is used, taking the value 1 if the post was boosted and 0 if it was not.

### ***Categorization***

The posts were then categorized into ‘entertaining’, ‘informative’, ‘social’ and ‘promotional’ posts. In addition they were also categorized by the level of interactivity and vividness. As mentioned in preceding chapters, Icelandair posts status updates in various languages, and only posts in each user’s language are shown on their news feed. In this thesis only the posts in Icelandic and English will be analyzed, i.e. those that are meant for Icelandic users to see and interact with and the posts in English which are posted to all the fans of the brand fan page. The posts only Icelandic users see will be referred to as ‘Icelandic posts’ and the other ones as ‘public posts’.

### ***Procedure***

Once complete, the data was then analyzed using multiple regression. The three dependent variables used as indicators of brand post popularity are the number of ‘likes’ ( $y_1$ ), the number of ‘comments’ ( $y_2$ ) and the number of ‘shares’ ( $y_3$ ), all of which are count data and are assumed to follow a Poisson distribution. The structural model is shown here below and the definition for each variable can be found in Table 3.

$$y_{ij} = \alpha + \exp \left( \sum_{f=1}^2 \beta_f \text{vivid}_{fj} + \sum_{g=1}^3 \beta_g \text{ia}_{gj} + \beta_i \text{info}_j + \beta_e \text{entertain}_j + \beta_p \text{promotion}_j + \beta_s \text{social} \right. \\ \left. + \beta_w \text{weekd}_j + \beta_o \text{pos} + \beta_t \text{text}_j + \beta_b \text{boost}_j + \beta_n \text{fans}_j \right) + \varepsilon_{ij}$$

As can be seen in Table 3, dummy variables were used for almost all of the factors. The only variables which are not dummy variables are the control variables fans, message length and position, which are numerical. The natural logarithm of the dependent variables, as well as of the independent count variables, was used to transform the model into linear form in order to be able to conduct the regressions.

*Table 3 Structural Model Variables*

Factor	Explanation
$y_{ij}$	$y_{1j}$ or $y_{2j}$ or $y_{3j}$ ; the number of ‘likes’ per brand post $j$ or the number of ‘comments’ per brand post $j$ or the number of ‘shares’ per brand post $j$ .
$vivid_{fj}$	dummy variables indicating whether the vividness characteristic $f$ is present or not in brand post $j$ (base category is no vividness)
$ia_{gj}$	dummy variables indicating whether the interactive characteristic $g$ is present or not in brand post $j$ (base category is no interactivity)
$info_j$	dummy variables indicating whether brand post $j$ is ‘informative’ (base category is no information)
$entertain_j$	dummy variable indicating whether brand post $j$ is ‘entertaining’ (base category is no entertainment)
$promotion_j$	dummy variable indicating whether brand post $j$ is ‘promotional’ (base category is no promotion)
$social_j$	dummy variable indicating whether brand post $j$ is ‘social’ (base category is no social)
$weekd_j$	dummy variable indicating whether brand post $j$ is placed during weekdays (base category is weekends)
$text_j$	indicating the number of words of brand post $j$
$position_j$	indicating the position of the brand post by the number of days the brand post $j$ is at the top of the brand fan page
$boost_j$	dummy variable indicating whether brand post $j$ is boosted (base category is no boost)
$fans_j$	indicating the number of fans at the time brand post $j$ was posted
$e_{ij}$	$e_{1j}$ or $e_{2j}$ or $e_{3j}$ ; normally distributed error terms for dependent variable $y_{1j}$ or $y_{2j}$ or $y_{3j}$ respectively

## 5.4 Icelandair’s Facebook Content

Four message types are distinguished in this paper: ‘informative’ posts, ‘entertaining’ posts, ‘promotional’ posts and ‘social’ posts. These four message types will be further described in the following paragraphs.

### Informative posts

‘Informative’ posts contain information about the brand, product or service the company provides. The general definition of information is: *facts provided or learned about something or someone* (Oxford Dictionary, 2015-a). Hong (2011) describes ‘informative’ posts as posts that provide information to consumers such as news releases or other official announcements. According to Cvijikj and Michahelles (2011) ‘informative’ posts include information regarding a sales location, number of fan page fans, etc.

Vries, Gensler and Leeflang (2012) describe ‘informative’ posts as posts that contain information about the company or the brand and/or its products. Gaber and Wright (2014) consider ‘informative’ content as content that marketers post with an intention to provide consumers with certain information, such as products, prices, services and social responsibility. In this thesis, ‘informative’ posts will be defined as posts containing information about the company or the brand and/or its services. Furthermore, important announcements to customers also belong in this category.

Informative posts from Icelandair include flight updates, new travel destinations, updates on new services and products that are provided both before take-off and on board. Posts about Saga Club, Saga Shop Kitchen and the Saga Collection Shop also fall into the ‘informative’ category.

### **Entertainment posts**

‘Entertainment’ posts include content that is entertaining. The general definition of entertainment is *the action of providing or being provided with amusement or enjoyment* (Oxford Dictionary, 2015-b). Hong (2011) describes ‘entertaining’ posts as content to amuse Facebook users such as links to multimedia, Facebook games or funny trivia about the brand or its products.

Vries, Gensler and Leeflang (2012) define ‘entertaining’ posts as content that is not related to the company or the brand such as general funny movies or anecdotes. Gaber and Wright (2014) define ‘entertaining’ content as posts that have the aim of putting a smile on the consumers’ faces and contain some form of humor, such as entertaining photos or references to big occasions such as New Year and Valentine’s Day. In this thesis, ‘entertaining’ posts will be defined as posts that include content that aims to interest users, such as interesting pictures, photos and videos. Trivia or some form of content that aims to educate users about some facts in an interesting way will also be defined as ‘entertaining’ content.

The definition of ‘entertainment’ varies from person to person. In the literature reviewed above, entertainment is usually described as something that is supposed to arouse joy among the users. However, Icelandair focuses more on entertainment that also aims to interest users rather than just make them laugh or smile. Entertainment posts thus include interesting pictures, photos and videos. Also included are trivia posts which contain interesting facts

about Icelandair or have the purpose of educating the users about something in an interesting way.

### **Promotional posts**

‘Promotional’ posts are posts that include various types of promotional content. The general definition of promotion is *the publicizing of a product, organization or venture so as to increase sales or public awareness* (Oxford Dictionary, 2015-c). Cvijikj and Michahelles (2011) use the term ‘advertising’ when talking about ‘promotional’ posts. They define advertising in posts as the *advertisement of existing products (mostly used in a form of photo posts)*.

Hong (2011) describes ‘promotional’ posts as involving a contest, coupon or any type of offer with the purpose of attracting the attention from the Facebook users to encourage participation in some way. Gaber and Wright (2014) use the term ‘incentive posts’ when talking about posts that have a promotional element. ‘Incentive’ posts are posts that create a certain incentive for users such as discounts or prizes if they participate by sharing or clicking on a certain advertisement. In this thesis, ‘promotional’ posts will be described as posts that include various offers, marketing campaigns, Facebook games and contests.

In the case of Icelandair, ‘promotional’ posts include various offers, marketing campaigns, Facebook games and contests. This includes “Hraðtilboð” [‘Spot offers’] which are discounts on flights which last only for a brief period each time. Icelandair has also launched several major marketing campaigns throughout the years and all posts related to those are categorized as ‘promotional’ posts. Facebook games and contests are also a ‘promotional’ content, often relating to events that Icelandair sponsors or marketing campaigns that are currently being run. Usually the contest and games involve some form of awards for the users who win.

### **Social posts**

The last post type is ‘social’ posts. These are posts that have some interactional feature or display in some way social activities, events or humanitarian work. The general definition of social is *relating to society or its organization* (Oxford Online Dictionaries, 2015-d). Cvijikj and Michahelles (2011) define ‘social’ posts as posts in the form of a question with the purpose of engaging users in a dialog.

Hong (2011) describes ‘social’ posts as post that have the purpose of encouraging users to participate, mainly by asking a question or inviting direct feedback from users. Moreover

Hong describes them as not usually providing ‘entertaining’ content and not being meant to be ‘informative’. Rather they should provide enough information on the certain post to seek user feedback. Hong mentions a few examples such as asking users for their opinion on a particular product or asking them a daily routine question such as what they did last weekend.

Gaber and Wright (2014) use the term ‘engaging content’ for posts that others have described as ‘social’ posts. Their definition of engaging content is that it calls for users to act in some way or perform a certain action, i.e., they are encouraged to engage with the advertisement. Gaber and Wright give some examples, such as when users are asked to rate their favorite sandwiches or drinks, asked to name a certain favorite branch or posts that include some kind of contests. In this thesis, ‘social’ posts are defined as posts that give notice of and report events or some social activities as well as open questions that are meant to encourage engagement among users.

In the case of Icelandair, ‘social’ posts are posts that notify the recipient about events or social activities that will take place offline in some specific locations. ‘Social’ posts include events that Icelandair sponsors such as Iceland Airwaves, and sport events, such as posts about matches played abroad by the Icelandic national football or handball teams. Other ‘social’ gatherings which are either hosted by Icelandair or supported by the company in some way are also included in this category of posts. Posts relating to Icelandair’s children welfare donations also fall into the ‘social’ category. Finally posts that contain open questions intended to create some kind of discussion amongst users also count as social posts. Note that ‘entertaining’ posts can sometimes be similar to ‘social’ posts but the difference is that ‘entertaining’ posts have the nature of being posted to give users pleasure while ‘social’ posts are more about what is on the top of the agenda in relation to Icelandair.

### **Overview of Post Types**

In Table 4 Icelandair’s brand fan page content is described in terms of the four categories mentioned above: ‘informative’, ‘entertainment’, ‘promotional’ and ‘social’. Table 5 offers a short description for each post category as well and presents examples of posts drawn from Icelandair’s Facebook posts. Further examples can also be found in appendix A.

Table 4  
*Icelandair's Brand Fan Page Content*

<b>Informative</b>	<b>Social</b>	<b>Promotion</b>	<b>Entertainment</b>
New destinations	Public events	Various offers	Interesting pictures and photos
Update on flight schedule	Holiday regards	Marketing campaigns	Interesting videos
Update on new products	Sports	Facebook games and contests	Trivia
Update on new services	Children welfare donations	-	-
-	Open questions	-	-

Table 5  
*Post Types and Examples*

<b>Post type</b>	<b>Explanation</b>	<b>Post examples</b>
<b>Informative</b>	Posts that contain information about the company or the brand and/or its services. Furthermore, important announcements to customers belong also in this category.	Today we signed a commitment with Boeing for 12 brand new and improved 737 MAX aircraft. This will give us new options for added frequency and destinations.
<b>Entertainment</b>	Posts that include content that aims to interest users, such as interesting pictures, photos and videos. Trivia or content that aims to educate users about topics in an interesting way will also be defined as entertainment content.	A cloud dragon? Only in Iceland! This photo was taken by Melissa, our UK Marketing Manager, last night at 11:05 p.m. as flight 455 from London landed in Keflavik.
<b>Promotional</b>	Posts that include various offers, marketing campaigns, Facebook games and contests.	The nominations are in, all 3000 of the. The competition is now closed but don't forget to check with us on November 28th when we announce the winners. #MyStopover
<b>Social</b>	Posts that notify people of events or social activities and also open questions that are meant to encourage engagement among users.	Today the Icelandair Special Children Travel Fund gave 13 more families the opportunity to travel to a destination of their dreams.

## 5.5 Interobserver Agreement Test

In order to affirm the categorization of posts by type, an interobserver agreement test was performed. The test was based on Poling *et al.*, (1995) and uses the following formula to evaluate the strength of the categorization:

$$IA = \frac{A}{A + D} * 100$$

Where A is the number of instances where two individuals agree on the categorization of a post and D is the number of instances where they do not. In order to perform the test, a random sample of 50 posts from the dataset were independently evaluated and categorized into one of the four post types ('informative', 'entertainment', 'social' and 'promotional') by two different individuals. The results were then compared in order to find number of instances where both were in agreement on a post type and the instances where there was not an agreement. The results were that in 42 instances both individuals agreed on the categorization of posts and in 8 instances the categorizations differed. This gives the following interobserver agreement value:

$$IA = \frac{42}{42 + 8} * 100 = 84$$

Due to the very general nature of the types used to categorize the posts, and the fact that posts can belong to more than one category, this value was deemed more than sufficient.

## 6 Results

This chapter will present descriptive statistics for the gathered data and the results of the multiple regression. In order to augment the analysis, the dataset was divided into 2 subsets, Icelandic posts (122 posts) and public posts (120 posts). The statistics and results for each subset will be reported along with those of the overall dataset.

### 6.1 Descriptive Statistics

Here the main features of the data will be analysed in forms of frequency, mean and standard deviation.

#### *Frequency and Percentages of Media- and Post Types*

The frequency and percentage of media types and post types is displayed in Table 6 below. Around 87% of the posts were vivid, 60.7% including a 'picture' and 26% including a 'video'. Of the 'Icelandic posts', 59% included a 'picture', which is about the same percentage as for the 'public posts' (62.5%). However, 'video' content is much more prevalent amongst 'Icelandic posts' with 36% of them including a 'video' against only 15.8% of the 'public posts'.

Nearly two thirds of the posts include 'no interactivity': 38.8% of them are interactive. The most popular interactive brand post characteristic is 'question' with 30.6% of all post falling into that category. The other categories, 'call to act' and 'link', together only amount to around 8% of posts. The distribution of the interactive brand post characteristics is fairly even for the 'Icelandic' and 'public posts'. However posts that display 'no interactivity' are more common (65.8%) amongst 'public posts' than amongst 'Icelandic posts' (56.6%). 'Link' has the lowest frequency both for the complete dataset and amongst 'public posts', while 'call to act' is the lowest for 'Icelandic posts'.

As for post types, 33.9% of posts included 'social' content, 29.8% of were 'promotional' posts, 27.3% 'informative' and 14.5% of the posts had 'entertaining' content. Among 'Icelandic posts', 'promotional' posts were the most frequent post type, (46.7%), with 'social' posts being the second most prevalent (34.4%), followed by 'informative' posts (23.8%) and finally there were no Icelandic 'entertaining' posts. For the 'public posts', 'social' posts were the most frequent post type (33.3%) while 'promotional' posts had the lowest percentage (12.5%). The frequencies of media and post types can also be seen in Figures 7-12 in appendix B.

Table 6  
*Frequency and Percentage of Media- and Post Types*

Media / Post type		All posts		Icel. posts		Public posts	
		Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
<b>Vividness</b>							
	Level						
	None	32	13.2%	6	4.9%	26	21.7%
Photo	Low	147	60.7%	72	59%	75	62.5%
Video	High	63	26.0%	44	36.1%	19	15.8%
		<b>242</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Interactivity</b>							
	Level						
	None	148	61.2%	69	56.6%	79	65.8%
Link	Low	9	3.7%	6	4.9%	3	2.5%
C. to act	Medium	11	4.5%	5	4.1%	6	5%
Question	High	74	30.6%	42	34.4%	32	26.7%
		<b>242</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Information</b>							
	No Information	176	72.7%	93	76.2%	83	69.2%
	Information	66	27.3%	29	23.8%	37	30.8%
		<b>242</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Entertainment</b>							
	No Entertainment	207	85.5%	-	-	85	70.8%
	Entertainment	35	14.5%	-	-	35	29.2%
		<b>242</b>	<b>100%</b>	-	-	<b>120</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Promotion</b>							
	No Promotion	170	70.2%	65	53.3%	105	87.5%
	Promotion	72	29.8%	57	46.7%	15	12.5%
		<b>242</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Social</b>							
	No Social	160	66.1%	80	65.6%	80	66.7%
	Social	82	33.9%	42	34.4%	40	33.3%
		<b>242</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100%</b>

### *Frequency and Percentages of the Dependent variables for Media Types*

In Table 7 here below the frequency and percentages of the dependent variables for media types will be displayed. All in all Icelandair's brand fan page generated 139,877 'likes', 14,584 'shares' and 9,480 'comments' during the period January 7<sup>th</sup> 2011 to January 29<sup>th</sup> 2015 in the overall dataset.

'Pictorial' content generated the most 'likes' (86.4%) while those posts that included 'videos' constituted 11.9% of 'likes'. Content that did not include any vividness only received 1.7% of the total number of 'likes'. Fans 'shared' 'pictorial' content the most, with 77.4% of 'shares' coming from 'pictures'. Fans also 'commented' the most on 'pictorial' content, 75.3% of the total 'comments' being on posts that included a picture.

Table 7  
*Frequency and Percentages of the Dependent Variables for Media Types*

Posts	Media type	Level	Operationaliza- tion	Likes		Shares		Comments	
				<b>Freq.</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Freq.</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Freq.</b>	<b>%</b>
All posts	<b>Vividness</b>	None		2,431	1.7%	137	0.9%	522	5.5%
		Low	Pictorial	120,831	86.4%	11,285	77.4%	7,141	75.3%
		High	Video	16,615	11.9%	3,162	21.7%	1,817	19.2%
				<b>139,877</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>14,584</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>9,480</b>	<b>100%</b>
	<b>Inter-activity</b>	None		106,612	76.2%	10,064	69.0%	4,514	47.6%
		Low	Link website	208	0.1%	26	0.2%	32	0.3%
		Medium	Call to act	3,572	2.6%	617	4.2%	1,096	11.6%
		High	Question	29,485	21.1%	3,877	26.6%	3,838	40.5%
				<b>139,877</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>14,584</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>9,480</b>	<b>100%</b>
Icelandic posts	<b>Vividness</b>	None		346	2.7%	15	1.1%	51	2.2%
		Low	Pictorial	8,466	66.9%	806	60.6%	1,755	74.8%
		High	Video	3,844	30.4%	508	38.2%	540	23.0%
				<b>12,656</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>1,329</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>2,346</b>	<b>100%</b>
	<b>Inter-activity</b>	None		6,882	54.4%	666	50.1%	395	16.8%
		Low	Link website	148	1.2%	15	1.1%	27	1.2%
		Medium	Call to act	357	2.8%	25	1.9%	630	26.9%
		High	Question	5,269	41.6%	623	46.9%	1,294	55.2%
				<b>12,656</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>1,329</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>2,346</b>	<b>100%</b>
Public posts	<b>Vividness</b>	None		2,085	1.6%	122	0.9%	471	6.6%
		Low	Pictorial	112,365	88.3%	10,479	79.1%	5,386	75.5%
		High	Video	12,771	10%	2,654	20.0%	1,277	17.9%
				<b>127,221</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>13,255</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>7,134</b>	<b>100%</b>
	<b>Inter-activity</b>	None		99,730	78.4%	9,398	70.9%	4,119	57.7%
		Low	Link website	60	0.0%	11	0.1%	5	0.1%
		Medium	Call to act	3,215	2.5%	592	4.5%	466	6.5%
		High	Question	24,216	19.0%	3,254	24.5%	2,544	35.7%
				<b>127,221</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>13,255</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>7,134</b>	<b>100%</b>

In ‘Icelandic posts’, 12,656 ‘likes’ were generated during the period mentioned above while ‘public posts’ generated 127,221 ‘likes’. For both ‘public’ and ‘Icelandic posts’, ‘pictorial’ content generated the most ‘likes’: 66.9% of the total ‘likes’ on ‘Icelandic posts’ and 88.3% of those on ‘public posts’. As mentioned above, ‘video’ content was posted much more often to Icelandic fans than to public fans. ‘Video’ content therefore received around 30% of ‘likes’ on ‘Icelandic posts’, against only about 10% of total ‘likes’ on ‘public posts’. Icelandic fans

‘shared’ videos more often than public fans, 38.2% of ‘shares’ involving ‘videos’ in their case as opposed to 20% of ‘shares’ coming from ‘videos’ in the case of public fans.

As for post interactivity, posts with ‘no interactivity’ generated the most ‘likes’ (76.2%) of which is not surprising since the posts containing ‘no interactivity’ accounted for about 60% of the total number of posts. Question-related posts generated 21.1% of the ‘likes’ while posts that included a ‘call to act’ generated only 2.6%. Posts with links received the fewest ‘likes’ (only 0.1%), and this category also scored the lowest frequency amongst interactive posts. As for ‘shares’ and ‘comments,’ most of these were on posts that had ‘no interactivity’, 69% in the case of ‘shares’ and 47.6% in the case of ‘comments’. ‘Question’ generated most ‘shares’ and ‘likes’ or 26.6% of ‘shares’ and 21.1% of ‘likes’. As for ‘comments’, ‘question’ generated 40.5% of ‘comments’.

Among both ‘Icelandic’ and ‘public posts’, ‘no interactivity’ posts generated most ‘likes’: 54.4% of ‘Icelandic’ and 78.4% of ‘public posts’. Next, Icelandic fans ‘liked’ posts most often that included ‘questions’ (41.6% of ‘likes’) while ‘public posts’ that included ‘questions’ generated only 19% of the ‘likes’. The same goes for ‘shares’: the biggest proportions of ‘shares’ among both ‘Icelandic posts’ and ‘public posts’ went to posts that did not include any interactivity. ‘Public posts’ received many more ‘comments’ on posts that did not include interactivity (57.7%) while among ‘Icelandic posts’ 16.8% of ‘comments’ were on posts that did not include interactivity. However ‘question’ received 55.2% of the ‘comments’ among ‘Icelandic posts’ and 35.7% among ‘public posts’.

### ***Frequency and Percentages of the Dependent Variables for Post Types***

Table 8 below presents the frequency and percentages of the dependent variables for post types. The brand post type that received the most ‘likes’ among post types was ‘entertainment’ with 51.8% of ‘likes’. This is a bit surprising given that there were far few ‘entertaining’ posts than posts of other types. ‘Entertaining’ content is also the content most often ‘shared’ by fans, accounting for 48.5% of the ‘shares’. ‘Promotional’ posts received the fewest ‘likes’ even though they were the most frequent post type. Just as with ‘likes’, ‘promotional’ content was also the least ‘shared’ amongst fans, accounting for only 12.7% of ‘shares’. Fans tended to ‘comment’ most on posts that included social content, ‘social’ posts generating 34.9% of the total number of ‘comments’. Fans ‘commented’ least on content that was ‘informative’ and ‘entertaining’, with ‘informative’ content generating 25.2% and ‘entertaining’ content generating 25.5% of ‘comments’.

Table 8

*Frequency and Percentages of the Dependent Variables for Post Types*

Posts	Relative Frequency	Likes		Shares		Comments	
<b>All</b>		<b>Freq</b>	<b>Pct</b>	<b>Freq</b>	<b>Pct</b>	<b>Freq</b>	<b>Pct</b>
Information	27.3%	28,990	20.7%	3,599	24.7%	2,389	25.2%
Entertainment	14.5%	72,475	51.8%	7,071	48.5%	2,422	25.5%
Promotion	29.8%	17,501	12.5%	1,846	12.7%	3,014	31.8%
Social	33.5%	25,787	18.4%	2,528	17.3%	3,309	34.9%
<b>Icelandic</b>							
Information	25.9%	3,068	24.2%	279	21.0%	277	11.8%
Promotion	34.4%	5,053	39.9%	635	47.8%	1,435	61.2%
Social	45.9%	5,887	46.5%	529	39.8%	1,810	77.2%
<b>Public</b>							
Information	15.4%	25,922	20.4%	3,320	25.0%	2,112	29.6%
Entertainment	16.7%	72,475	57.0%	7,071	53.3%	2,422	34.0%
Promotion	6.3%	12,448	9.8%	1,211	9.1%	1,204	16.9%
Social	14.6%	19,900	15.6%	1,999	15.1%	1,874	26.3%

Please note that the summations of the percentage columns are more than 100% since some brand posts fall into more than one category.

Among only the ‘Icelandic posts’, ‘social’ posts were ‘liked’ the most, generating 46.5% of ‘likes’, while Icelandic fans rarely ‘liked’ ‘informative’ content. ‘Promotional’ content was ‘shared’ the most often amongst Icelandic fans, accounting for 47.8% of ‘shares’, while ‘social’ content was ‘commented’ on most frequently. As for ‘public posts’, ‘entertainment’ was the most popular brand post category; having both the most ‘likes’ and ‘comments’ as well as the biggest proportion of ‘shares’. The distribution of post types can also be seen in Figures 13-15 in Appendix B.

*Mean and Standard Deviation for the Dependent Variables for Media- and Post Types*

Table 9 displays the mean and standard deviation for the number of ‘likes’, ‘shares’ and ‘comments’ of post- and media types. In the overall dataset, ‘pictorial’ content had the highest average number of ‘likes’, ‘shares’ and ‘comments’. The average (M) for ‘pictorial’ content was 821.98 ‘likes’ (SD=3112.105); 76.77 ‘shares’ (SD=293.130) and 48.58 ‘comments’ (SD=106.104) per post. Among ‘Icelandic posts’, ‘pictorial’ content also had the highest average for ‘likes’ and ‘comments’. The average number of ‘likes’ was 117.58 (SD=162.183) for each post and the average number of ‘comments’ was 24.38 (SD=73.847).

However, posts that included 'videos' were 'shared' slightly more often, on average, than posts that included 'pictorial' content, video posts having an average of 11.55 (SD=16.582) 'shares' per post while 'pictorial' content had an average of 11.19 (SD=16.674) per post.

Among 'public posts', 'pictorial' content also had the highest average number of 'likes', 'comments' and 'shares' per post. The average number of 'likes' was 1498.20 (SD=4258.777) per post and the average number of 'comments' was 71.81 (SD=125.945) per post. The averages for the number of 'shares' on post containing 'pictorial' content and those containing video content were almost the same, with posts containing 'pictorial' content averaging 139.72 (SD=401.324) 'shares' per post and those containing video content having an average of 139.68 (SD=196.527) 'shares' per post.

For interactivity, 'no interactivity' had the highest average number of 'likes', 720.35 (SD=3104.738) per post, as well as the highest average number of 'shares', 68 (SD=291.475). For 'comments', 'call to act' had the highest number of 'shares' or 99.64 (SD=113.633). Among 'Icelandic posts', 'question' received the highest average number of 'likes' and 'shares' or 125.45 (SD=153.441) 'likes' per post and 14.83 (SD=21.198) 'shares' per post. For 'comments', 'call to act' generated the far most 'comments' or 126 (SD=122.540) per post. For 'public posts', 'no interactivity' generated the highest amount of average 'likes' and 'shares', 1262.41 (SD=4184.288) 'likes' and 118.96 (SD=392.833) 'shares', while posts that included 'question' got the highest number of average 'comments' or 79.5 (SD=112.076) per post.

Regarding post types, posts that included 'entertainment' content generated the highest average of 'likes', 'comment' and 'shares'. The average number of 'likes' was 2070.71 (SD=6150.640) 'likes' per post, the average number of 'shares' was 202 (SD=576.536) 'shares' per post and the average number of 'comments' was 69.2 (SD=164.242) 'comments' per post. Among 'Icelandic posts' social content generated most 'likes', 'shares' and 'comments'. The average number of 'likes' was 140.17 (SD=185.728) 'likes' per post, the average number of 'shares' was 12.60 (SD=16.312) shares per post and the average number of 'comments' was 34.17 (SD=95.127) 'comments' per post. Among 'public posts' 'entertainment' content generated the highest average of 'likes' and 'shares' or 2070.71 (SD=6150.640) 'likes' per post and 202.03 (SD=576.536) 'shares' per post. 'Promotional' content generated the highest average number of 'comments' among 'public posts' or 80.27 (SD=130.392) 'comments' per post. The average numbers of 'likes', 'comments' and 'shares' for post types can also be seen in Figures 16-18 in appendix B.

Table 9

*Mean and St. Dev. of the Dependent Variables regarding Media Types and Post Types*

Posts	Media type/ Post type	Operational- ization	Likes		Shares		Comments	
			Mean	St. Dev	Mean	St. Dev	Mean	St. Dev
All	<b>Vividness</b>	None	75.97	152.168	4.28	9.802	16.31	25.081
		Picture	821.98	3112.105	76.77	293.130	48.58	106.104
		Video	263.73	584.009	50.19	122.139	28.84	76.495
	<b>Interactivity</b>	None	720.35	3104.738	68.00	291.475	30.50	88.077
		Link webs.	23.11	14.709	2.89	4.986	3.56	6.247
		Call to act	324.73	532.958	56.09	117.447	99.64	113.633
		Question	398.45	643.677	52.39	114.047	51.86	99.171
Icelandic	<b>Vividness</b>	None	57.67	92.097	2.50	6.124	8.50	11.743
		Picture	117.58	162.183	11.19	16.674	24.38	73.847
		Video	87.36	125.426	11.55	16.582	12.27	28.335
	<b>Interactivity</b>	None	99.74	151.427	9.65	13.226	5.72	8.372
		Link webs.	24.67	17.489	2.50	4.806	4.50	7.635
		Call to act	71.40	93.532	5.00	10.100	126.00	122.540
		Question	125.45	153.441	14.83	21.198	30.81	83.446
Public	<b>Vividness</b>	None	80.19	164.064	4.69	10.521	18.12	27.100
		Picture	1498.20	4258.777	139.72	401.324	71.81	125.945
		Video	672.16	940.792	139.68	196.527	67.21	126.540
	<b>Interactivity</b>	None	1262.41	4184.288	118.96	392.833	52.14	116.368
		Link webs.	20.00	8.888	3.67	6.351	1.67	1.528
		Call to act	535.83	665.910	98.67	150.734	77.67	111.973
		Question	756.75	843.223	101.69	160.046	79.50	112.076
All	<b>Information</b>		439.24	799.668	54.53	124.855	36.20	60.397
	<b>Entertainment</b>		2070.71	6150.640	202.03	576.536	69.20	164.242
	<b>Promotion</b>		243.07	501.169	25.64	62.527	41.86	97.041
	<b>Social</b>		314.48	528.187	30.83	49.155	40.35	86.575
Icelandic	<b>Information</b>		105.79	132.875	9.62	14.683	9.55	10.622
	<b>Entertainment</b>		-	-	-	-	-	-
	<b>Promotion</b>		88.65	131.159	11.14	17.336	31.75	84.792
	<b>Social</b>		140.17	185.728	12.60	16.312	34.17	95.127
Public	<b>Information</b>		700.59	990.501	89.73	158.369	57.08	74.017
	<b>Entertainment</b>		2070.71	6150.640	202.03	576.536	69.20	164.242
	<b>Promotion</b>		829.87	859.634	80.73	120.487	80.27	130.392
	<b>Social</b>		497.50	689.987	49.98	63.214	46.85	77.260

### *Descriptive Statistics for Weekdays and Boosted Posts*

Table 10 displays the frequency and percentage of the control variables ‘boosted’ posts and posts that were posted on weekdays. As can be seen in the table below, a total of 104 posts were ‘boosted’, the number being equally divided amongst Icelandic and public posts with 52 ‘boosted’ posts in each category. Most of the posts were posted on weekdays or 216 posts, of which 109 were ‘Icelandic posts’ and 107 ‘public posts’.

Table 10

#### *Descriptive Statistics for Weekdays and Boosted Posts*

Posts	Control variable	Level	Frequency	Percent
All posts	Boost	No boost	138	57%
		Boost	104	43%
	Weekday	Not weekday	26	10.7%
		Weekday	216	89.3%
Icelandic posts	Boost	No boost	70	57.4%
		Boost	52	42.6%
	Weekday	Not weekday	13	10.7%
		Weekday	109	89.3%
Public posts	Boost	No boost	68	56.7%
		Boost	52	43.3%
	Weekday	Not weekday	13	10.8%
		Weekday	107	89.2%

### *Descriptive Statistics for Position and Message Length*

Table 11 displays some further post characteristics: their ‘message length’ and ‘position’, i.e., the number of days the post stayed at the top of the brand fan page. The average length of time was about 12 days and there was no significant difference here between ‘Icelandic posts’ and ‘public posts’. ‘Icelandic posts’ stayed at the top of the brand fan page for a minimum of 0 days and a maximum of 68 days, while ‘public posts’ stayed at the top of the page for a minimum of 0 days and a maximum of 78 days. The average ‘message length’ of posts for the entire dataset was 28.16 words per post. For ‘Icelandic posts’ the average ‘message length’ was 22.49 words and for ‘public posts’ 33.92 words. The maximum number of words in ‘Icelandic posts’ was 166 words and in ‘public posts’ 100 words.

Table 11  
*Descriptive Statistics for Position and Message Length*

Posts	Statistics	Position	Message Length
All posts	<b>Mean</b>	12.01	28.16
	<b>Std. Deviation</b>	14.31	26.47
	<b>Minimum</b>	0	0
	<b>Maximum</b>	78	166
Icelandic posts	<b>Mean</b>	11.86	22.49
	<b>Std. Deviation</b>	14.47	27.43
	<b>Minimum</b>	0	0
	<b>Maximum</b>	68	166
Public posts	<b>Mean</b>	12.16	33.92
	<b>Std. Deviation</b>	14.2	24.23
	<b>Minimum</b>	0	0
	<b>Maximum</b>	78	100

## 6.2 Regression Analysis of All Posts

The estimation results of multiple regression analysis of ‘all posts’ are presented in Table 12. The effects of the potential explanatory variables on the components of brand post popularity, the number of ‘likes’, ‘comments’ and ‘shares’ are clearly different.

### *Likes*

The model for the number of ‘likes’ is significant as a whole ( $F\text{-value} = 19.616$ ,  $p\text{-value} < 0.01$ ) and explains the variance of the dependent variable reasonably well ( $R^2 = 54.7\%$ , adj.  $R^2 = 52.0\%$ ). The low level of vividness (i.e., ‘picture’) is significantly related to the number of ‘likes’ ( $\beta_{\text{picture}} = 0.645$ ,  $p\text{-value} < 0.05$ ). But the high degree of vividness (i.e. ‘video’) is non-significantly related to the number of ‘likes’. The low level of interactivity (i.e. link website) is significantly and negatively related to the number of ‘likes’ ( $\beta_{\text{link}} = -0.812$ ,  $p\text{-value} < 0.10$ ).

Table 12  
Multiple Regression Analysis of 'All posts'

All posts			Log Likes	Log Comments	Log Shares
Vividness	None	(baseline)	-	-	-
	Low	Picture	<b>0.645</b>	-0.483	<b>3.494</b>
	High	Video	0.163	<b>-1.730</b>	<b>3.985</b>
Interactivity	None	(baseline)	-	-	-
	Low	Link website	<b>-0.812</b>	-2.129	-2.091
	Medium	Call to act	0.564	1.672	0.003
	High	Question	0.218	<b>1.451</b>	0.029
Information		No information (baseline)	-	-	-
		Information	0.100	2.142	-0.111
Entertainment		No entertainment (baseline)	-	-	-
		Entertainment	<b>1.010</b>	<b>3.685</b>	<b>4.021</b>
Promotion		No promotion (baseline)	-	-	-
		Promotion	<b>-1.176</b>	1.000	-2.241
Social		No social (baseline)	-	-	-
		Social	0.044	1.376	-0.007
Control variables		Weekdays	0.427	-0.256	0.129
		Fans	<b>0.955</b>	<b>0.795</b>	<b>3.195</b>
		Boost	<b>0.760</b>	0.672	<b>2.823</b>
		Message length	-0.008	-0.077	0.144
		Position	0.028	-0.086	-0.105
Constant		N	242	242	242
		F-value	<b>19.616</b>	<b>2.832</b>	<b>13.406</b>
		R2	0.547	0.149	0.453
		Adj. R2	0.520	0.097	0.419

Bold figures:  $p$ -value < 0.05, Bold italic figures:  $p$ -value < 0.10. Reported are unstandardized coefficients.

The medium-level and high-level interactive media types (i.e. 'call to act' and 'question') are not significantly related to the number of 'likes'. Providing 'information' in a brand post is not significantly related to the number of 'likes'. 'Entertaining' posts are very significant to the number of 'likes' ( $\beta_e = 1.010$ ,  $p$ -value < 0.05). 'Promotional' posts are significantly and negatively related to the number of 'likes' ( $\beta_p = -1.176$ ,  $p$ -value < 0.05). However posts that include 'social' content are not significantly related to the number of 'likes'.

### Comments

The model for the number of 'comments' is significant as a whole (F-value) = 2.832,  $p$ -value < 0.01) and explains the variance of the dependent variable reasonably well (R2 = 14.9%, adj. R2 = 9.7%). The low level of vividness (i.e. 'picture') is not significantly related to the number of 'comments' but the high level of vividness (i.e. video) is marginally significantly

and negatively related to the number of ‘comments’ ( $\beta_{\text{video}} = -1.730$ ,  $p\text{-value} < 0.10$ ). The low and medium levels of interactivity (i.e. ‘link website’ and ‘call to act’) are not significantly related to the number of ‘comments’. The high level of interactivity (i.e. ‘question’) is, on the other hand, very significantly and positively related to comments ( $\beta_{\text{question}} = 1.451$ ,  $p\text{-value} < 0.05$ ). Whether a brand post is ‘informative’, ‘social’ or ‘promotional’ has no influence on the number of ‘comments’. However, if the brand post is ‘entertaining,’ this is very significantly and positively related to the number of ‘comments’ ( $\beta_e = 3.685$ ,  $p\text{-values} < 0.05$ ).

### ***Shares***

The model for the number of ‘shares’ is significant as a whole ( $F\text{-value} = 13.406$ ,  $p\text{-value} < 0.01$ ) and explains the variance of the dependent variable reasonably well ( $R^2 = 45.3\%$ , adj.  $R^2 = 41.9\%$ ). The low level of vividness (i.e. ‘picture’) and the high level of vividness (i.e. ‘video’) are both very significantly related to the number of ‘shares’ ( $\beta_{\text{picture}} = 3.494$ ;  $\beta_{\text{video}} = 3.985$ ,  $p\text{-value} < 0.05$ ). The low, medium and high levels of interactivity (i.e. ‘link website’, ‘call to act’ and ‘question’) are not significantly related to the number of ‘shares’. Providing ‘informative’, ‘social’ or ‘promotional’ content in a brand post is not significantly related to the number of ‘shares’. However ‘entertaining’ content is significantly related to the number of ‘shares’ ( $\beta_e = 4.021$ ,  $p\text{-values} < 0.05$ ).

## **6.3 Regression Analysis of Icelandic Posts**

The estimation results of multiple regression analysis of ‘Icelandic posts’ are presented in Table 13.

### ***Likes***

The model for the number of ‘likes’ is significant as a whole ( $F\text{-value} = 6.083$ ,  $p\text{-value} < 0.01$ ) and explains the variance of the dependent variable reasonably well ( $R^2 = 42.3\%$ , adj.  $R^2 = 35.3\%$ ). The low and high levels of vividness, ‘picture’ and ‘video’ are not significantly related to the number of ‘likes’. Neither are the low and medium level of interactivity (i.e. ‘link website’ and ‘call to act’) significantly related to the number of ‘likes’. However the high-level of interactivity (i.e. ‘question’) is significantly related to the number of ‘likes’ ( $\beta_{\text{question}} = 0.470$ ,  $p\text{-values} < 0.10$ ). The post types ‘information’, ‘promotion’ and ‘social’ have no significant relation to the number of ‘likes’.

Table 13  
*Multiple Regression Analysis of 'Icelandic Posts'*

All posts			Log Likes	Log Comments	Log Shares
<b>Vividness</b>	None	(baseline)	-	-	-
	Low	Picture	-0.046	1.270	2.421
	High	Video	-0.156	0.526	<b>4.717</b>
<b>Interactivity</b>	None	(baseline)	-	-	-
	Low	Link website	-0.182	0.559	-0.262
	Medium	Call to act	-0.172	-0.655	-2.756
	High	Question	<b>0.470</b>	1.843	1.215
<b>Information</b>		No information (baseline)	-	-	-
		Information	0.434	4.806	0.988
		No promotion (baseline)	-	-	-
<b>Promotion</b>		Promotion	-0.302	5.643	-0.467
<b>Social</b>		No social (baseline)	-	-	-
		Social	0.610	4.124	1.788
<b>Control variables</b>		Weekdays	0.431	-0.854	0.480
		Fans	<b>0.570</b>	-0.378	<b>2.966</b>
		Boost	<b>0.833</b>	1.476	<b>3.079</b>
		Message length	-0.036	-0.200	-0.154
		Position	0.004	-0.192	-0.187
<b>Constant</b>		N	121	121	121
		F-value	<b>6.083</b>	1.280	<b>4.315</b>
		R2	0.423	0.134	0.342
		Adj. R2	0.353	0.029	0.263

Bold figures:  $p$ -value < 0.05, Bold italic figures:  $p$ -value < 0.10. Reported coefficients are unstandardized.

### **Comments**

The model for the number of 'comments' is not significant as a whole (F-value) = 1.280 ,  $p$ -value > 0.10) and therefore no factor can be found significant.

### **Shares**

The model for the number of 'shares' is significant as a whole (F-value) = 4.315 ,  $p$ -value < 0.01) and explains the variance of the dependent variable well (R2 = 34.2%, adj. R2 = 26.3%). There is no significant relation between the low level of vividness (i.e. 'picture') and the number of 'shares' but there is however significant relation between the high level of vividness (i.e. 'video') and the number of 'shares' ( $\beta_{\text{video}} = 4.717$ ,  $p$ -value < 0.10). There can not be found any influence for low, medium and high level of interactivity (i.e. 'link website', 'call to act' and 'question') on the number of 'shares'. The same applies to brand

post types, ‘informative’, ‘promotional’ and ‘social’ posts have no influence on the number of ‘shares’.

#### **6.4 Regression Analysis of Public Posts**

The estimation results of multiple regression analysis of ‘public posts’ are presented in Table 14. The effects of the potential explanatory variables on the components of brand post popularity, the number of ‘likes’, ‘comments’ and ‘shares’ are clearly different.

##### ***Likes***

The model for the number of ‘likes’ is significant as a whole ( $F\text{-value} = 18.205$ ,  $p\text{-value} < 0.01$ ) and explains the variance of the dependent variable reasonably well ( $R^2 = 70.8\%$ ,  $\text{adj. } R^2 = 66.9\%$ ). A significant relation was found between the low level of vividness (i.e. ‘picture’) and the high level of vividness (i.e. ‘video’) and the number of ‘likes’ ( $\beta_{\text{picture}} = 1.648$ ,  $p\text{-value} < 0.05$ ;  $\beta_{\text{video}} = 0.829$ ,  $p\text{-value} < 0.05$ ). The low level of interactivity, ‘link website’ is very significant and negatively related to the number of ‘likes’ ( $\beta_{\text{link}} = -1.648$ ,  $p\text{-value} < 0.05$ ). For the medium and high levels of interactivity (i.e. ‘call to act’ and ‘question’) there was no significant relation. No significant relation was found between post types (i.e. ‘informative’, ‘entertaining’, ‘promotional’ and ‘social’) and the number of ‘likes’.

##### ***Comments***

The model for the number of ‘comments’ is significant as a whole ( $F\text{-value} = 9.037$ ,  $p\text{-value} < 0.01$ ), and explains the variance of the dependent variable reasonably well ( $R^2 = 54.6\%$ ,  $\text{adj. } R^2 = 48.6\%$ ). A significant relation was found between the low level of vividness (i.e. ‘picture’) and the number of ‘comments’ ( $\beta_{\text{picture}} = 0.866$ ,  $p\text{-value} < 0.05$ ). The low level of interactivity (i.e. ‘link website’) has a negative influence on the number of ‘comments’ ( $\beta_{\text{link}} = -6.489$ ,  $p\text{-value} < 0.05$ ). On the other hand, the medium and high level interactive media types (i.e. ‘call to act’ and ‘question’) have no significant relation to the number of ‘comments’. Whether posts are ‘informative’, ‘entertaining’, ‘promotional’ or ‘social’ has no effect on the number of ‘comments’.

##### ***Shares***

The model for the number of ‘shares’ is significant as a whole ( $F\text{-value} = 14.568$ ,  $p\text{-value} < 0.01$ ) and explains the variance of the dependent variable reasonably well ( $R^2 = 66\%$ ,  $\text{adj. } R^2 = 61.5\%$ ). A significant relation was found between the low level of vividness (i.e. ‘picture’) and the high level of vividness (i.e. ‘video’) and the the number of ‘shares’ ( $\beta_{\text{photo}}$

= 6.066,  $p$ -value < 0.05;  $\beta_{\text{video}} = 4.234$ ,  $p$ -value < 0.05). No significant relation was found between the low, medium and high levels of interactivity (i.e. ‘link website’, ‘call to act’ and ‘question’) and the number of ‘shares’. Posts that contain ‘informative’, ‘entertaining’, ‘promotional’ or ‘social’ content had no effect on the number of ‘shares’.

Table 14  
*Multiple Regression Analysis of ‘Public Posts’*

Public posts			Log Likes	Log Comments	Log Shares
<b>Vividness</b>	No	(baseline)	-	-	-
	Low	Picture	<b>1.648</b>	<b>0.866</b>	<b>6.066</b>
	High	Video	<b>0.829</b>	-0.285	<b>4.234</b>
<b>Interactivity</b>	No	(baseline)	-	-	-
	Low	Link website	<b>-1.648</b>	<b>-6.489</b>	-0.352
	Medium	Call to act	-0.118	0.215	-1.035
	High	Question	-0.143	0.353	-1.217
<b>Information</b>		No information (baseline)	-	-	-
		Information	-0.165	0.895	-0.786
<b>Entertainment</b>		No entertainment (baseline)	-	-	-
		Entertainment	-0.068	0.311	1.095
<b>Promotion</b>		No promotion (baseline)	-	-	-
		Promotion	-0.559	0.128	-1.355
<b>Social</b>		No social (baseline)	-	-	-
		Social	-0.340	0.397	-0.567
<b>Control variables</b>		Weekdays	0.308	0.183	0.048
		Fans	<b>0.868</b>	<b>0.576</b>	<b>2.379</b>
		Boost	<b>1.109</b>	<b>0.852</b>	<b>3.467</b>
		Message length	-0.036	<b>-0.122</b>	<b>0.481</b>
		Position	0.041	0.031	-0.080
<b>Constant</b>		N	119	119	119
		F-value	<b>18.205</b>	<b>9.037</b>	<b>14.568</b>
		R <sup>2</sup>	0.708	0.546	0.660
		Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	0.669	0.486	0.615

Bold figures:  $p$ -value < 0.05, Bold italic figures:  $p$ -value < 0.10. Reported coefficients are unstandardized.

## 7 Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to identify the kinds of content that are likely to increase post popularity on Icelandair's brand fan page. Post popularity was measured as the number of times a post was 'liked', 'shared' or 'commented' on by Facebook users. The study was conducted using data from Icelandair's fan page. Posts posted between the beginning of 2011 and early 2015 were collected and then analyzed and categorized by post types. A distinction was also made between those posts which were in Icelandic, and only targeted at Icelandic fans, and those which were in English, and targeted at all of Icelandair's fans.

Icelandair was chosen as the subject of the study for two reasons. Firstly, the company has a very active and progressive social media marketing strategy. It aims to utilize social media mainly in order to attain customer engagement and create brand awareness. The company also wants to use Facebook as a proactive platform which encourages consumers to report any problems or suggest ways to improve the services it offers. Secondly, competition amongst airlines has been increasing tremendously over the last decade. This has meant that marketing has become more important than ever before. Airlines are in a sense forced to adopt and utilize quickly any new approaches or methods in marketing. This means that any opportunities for improvement in the way Icelandair has conducted its Facebook marketing strategy will be of great value to the company, and possible other airlines as well.

The level of vividness a post exhibits appears to be an important indicator in determining its popularity. When the regression test was run on all the posts, the results showed that vividness was positively related both to the number of 'likes' and 'shares', while the coefficients were not statistically relevant in the case of 'comments'. When only the 'Icelandic posts' were used in the regression, the only statistically significant relationship was a positive relationship between vividness and 'shares'. On the other hand, the results of the regression when only 'public posts' were used showed that there was a positive relationship between vividness and all the popularity indicators. It is particularly interesting to see that the high level of vividness ('video') is significantly positively related to 'shares' in all three sets ('all posts', 'Icelandic posts' and 'public posts'). This might be explained by the fact that Icelandair's fans are more motivated to share richer media with other users. It is also interesting to note that the low level of vividness ('picture') was likewise significantly positively related to 'shares' in all but one case. Overall, the results therefore seem to suggest that there is a fairly strong relationship between the level of vividness and post popularity. This is in line with former research findings (Vries *et al.* (2012) and Cvijikj and Michahelles

(2011, 2013)), which have also proposed a positive relationship between vividness and post popularity.

With regard to interactivity, however, the results are more mixed. When the regression test was run on all the posts, the results showed a negative relationship between the low level of interactivity ('link') and the number of 'likes' both in the case of 'all posts' and 'public posts'. This might be explained by the fact that posts that contain a link direct fans to other websites<sup>1</sup> which are not necessarily related to the brand. Fans might be more interested in the brand itself or something related to it and thus not very motivated to follow the link. There was no significant relationship between the medium level of interactivity, (i.e. call to act), and brand post popularity in any of the three sets. For the high interactivity level (i.e. question) statistically significant relationships were found in only two cases: a positive relationship to 'comments' in 'all posts' and a positive relationship to 'likes' in 'Icelandic posts'. The former might be caused by the fact that a question naturally encourages fans to give an answer and the only way to do so is to make a 'comment'. This was also the conclusion of Vries *et al.* (2012), who also found a positive relationship between 'comments' and the high level of interactivity, (i.e. question).

When it comes to post types, it looks as if 'entertaining' posts are the only ones which are likely to increase post popularity. However, in most of the models the coefficients for posts types were all statistically insignificant. Only in the case of 'all posts' did the results indicate statistically significant relationships between post types and post popularity. A positive relationship was found between 'entertaining' posts and the number of 'likes', 'comments' and 'shares'. This might be because some Facebook users like to utilize Facebook as a way to seek out 'entertaining' content. The results also indicated that 'promotional' posts had a negative effect on the number of 'likes'. These results confirm the conclusions of other studies (Shen and Bissell, 2013; Swani *et al.* 2013; Hong, 2011), most of which have shown that 'promotional' posts tend not to be popular amongst users, while 'entertaining' posts usually are. This is also in line with Facebook's current policy, which has, since the beginning of this year, been to reduce the number of 'promotional' posts, except for those which are paid promotions.

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<sup>1</sup> As mentioned above, according to the classification used here, posts are considered to include a link as long as they direct the user somewhere else than to the company's website or Facebook brand page.

## **7.1 Managerial Implications**

Judging by the results, Icelandair should keep on posting vivid posts on its brand fan page, whether these are in the form of ‘pictures’ or ‘videos’. Since there is a strong positive relationship between vivid content and post popularity, it might also consider including vivid content in more of its posts, even those in which it would not have included such content before.

Furthermore, Icelandair should focus on its own content as much as possible, as opposed to directing fans to other websites or external content not related to the brand itself. The results also show that asking open-ended questions is effective in engaging customers and increasing the organic reach of posts.

Promotional posts appear to have a negative effect on post popularity and in view of this Icelandair should minimize the use of such posts. On the other hand, ‘entertaining’ posts are much more popular than any other type of post. This means that Icelandair might want to utilize such posts more, perhaps even by combining ‘promotional’ and ‘entertaining’ content. This might lead users to perceive the post as not being as unambiguously promotional and thus change users’ attitudes towards it while still delivering the same message. The almost complete lack of ‘entertaining’ content targeted specifically at Icelandic fans is also surprising. Icelandair should increase the number of such posts in order to maximize brand post popularity among Icelandic fans.

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## Appendix A – Post Type Examples



Figure 3 Example of an ‘informative’ post



Figure 4 Example of an ‘entertaining’ post



Figure 5 Example of a ‘promotional’ post



Figure 6 Example of a ‘social post’

## Appendix B - Descriptive Statistics

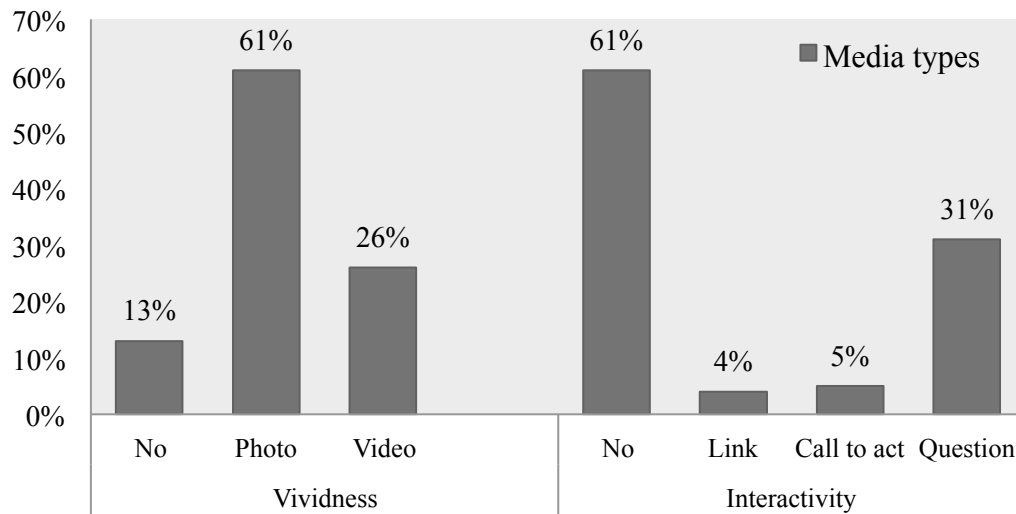


Figure 7 Frequency of media types for 'all posts'

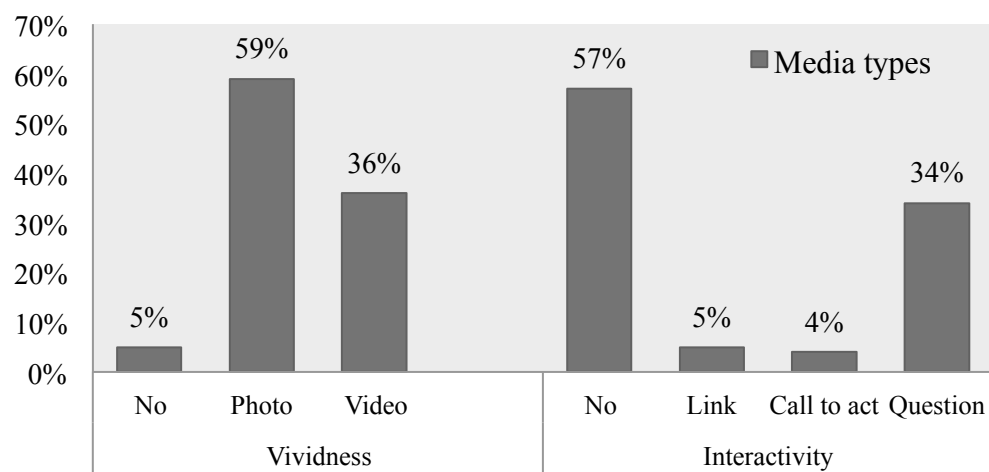


Figure 8 Frequency of media types for 'Icelandic posts'

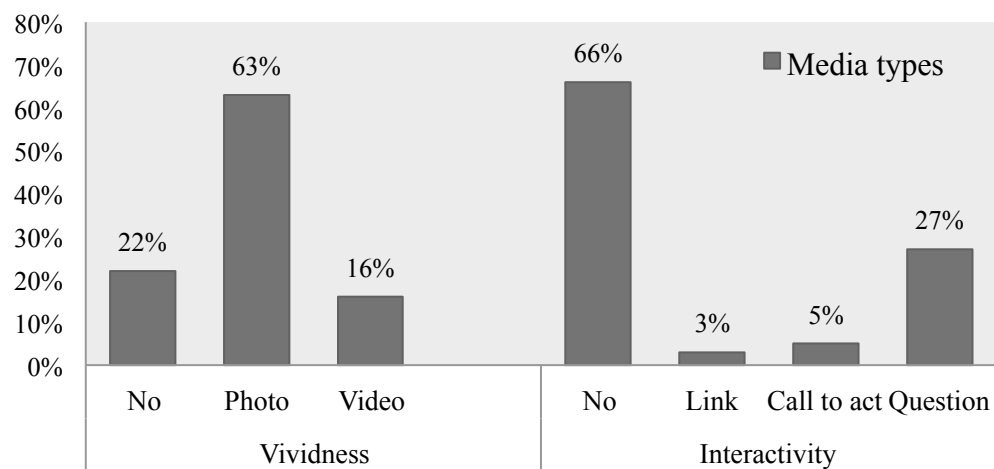
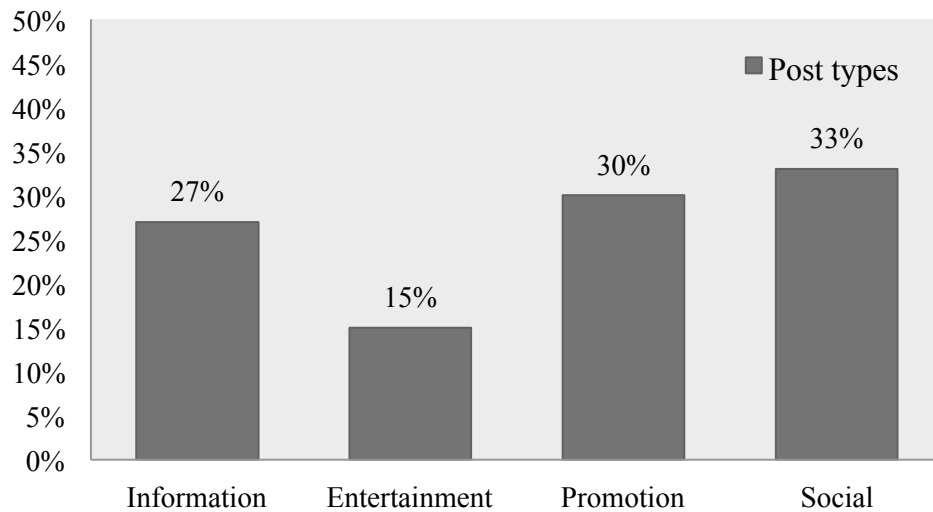
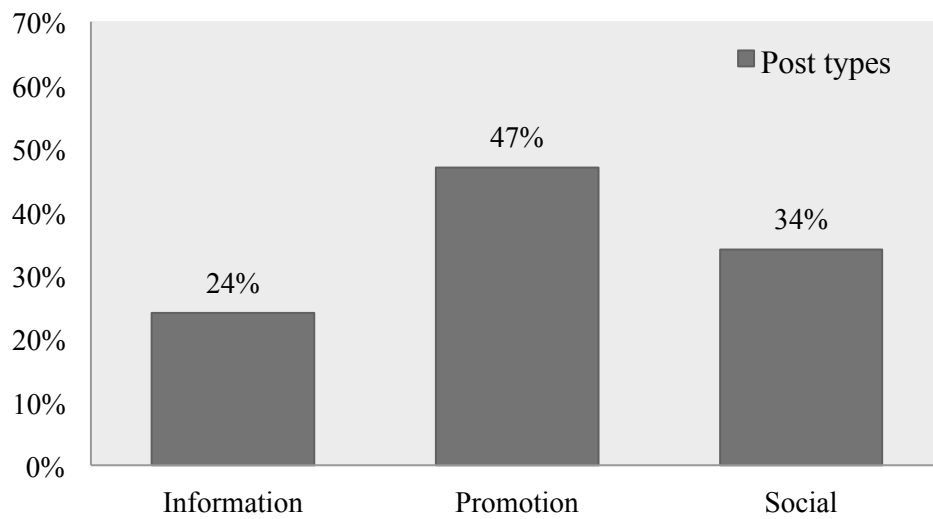


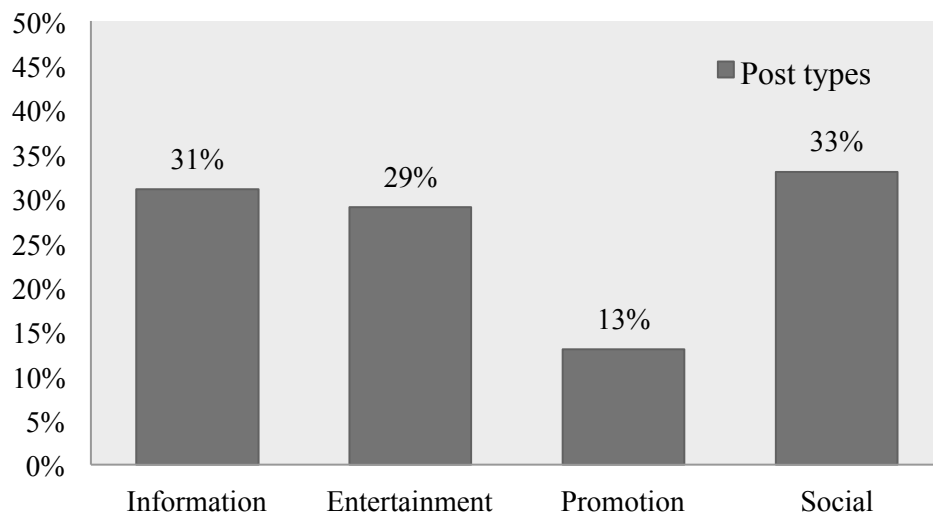
Figure 9 Frequency of media types for 'public posts'



*Figure 10* Frequency of post types for ‘all posts’



*Figure 11* Frequency of post types for ‘Icelandic posts’



*Figure 12* Frequency of post types for ‘public posts’

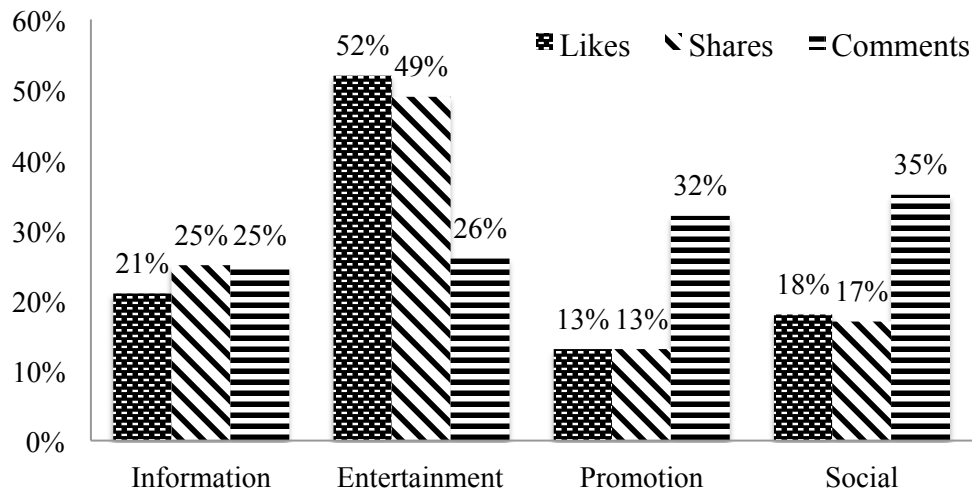


Figure 13 Total number of 'likes', 'shares' and 'comments' for post types – 'All posts'

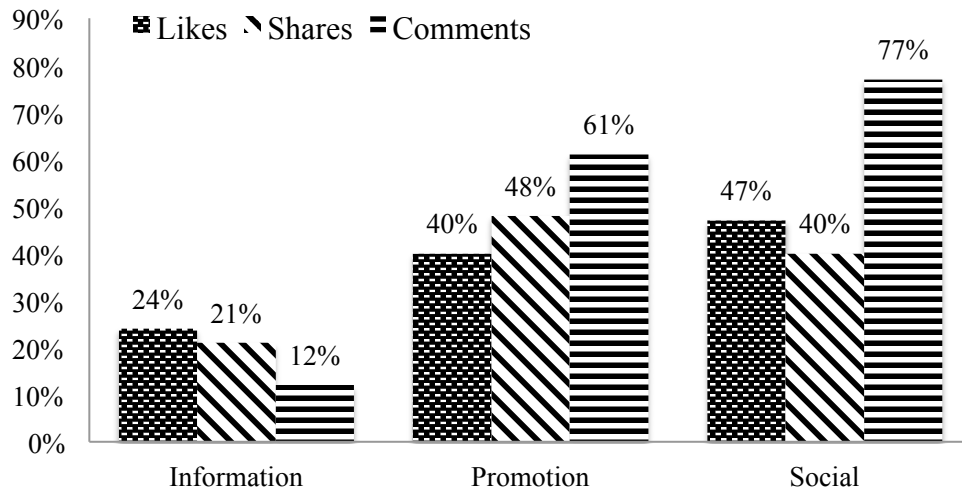


Figure 14 Total number of 'likes', 'shares' and 'comments' for post types – 'Icelandic posts'

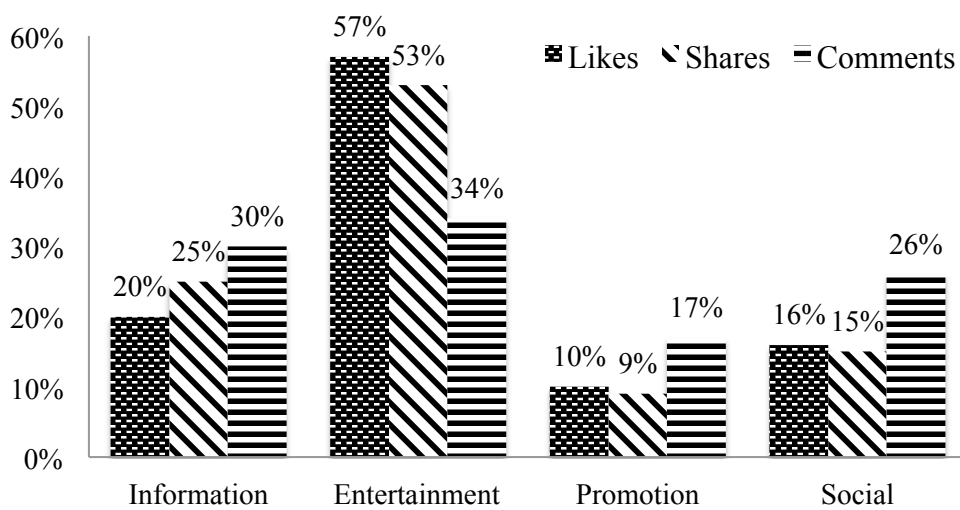


Figure 15 Total number of 'likes', 'shares' and 'comments' for post types – 'Public posts'

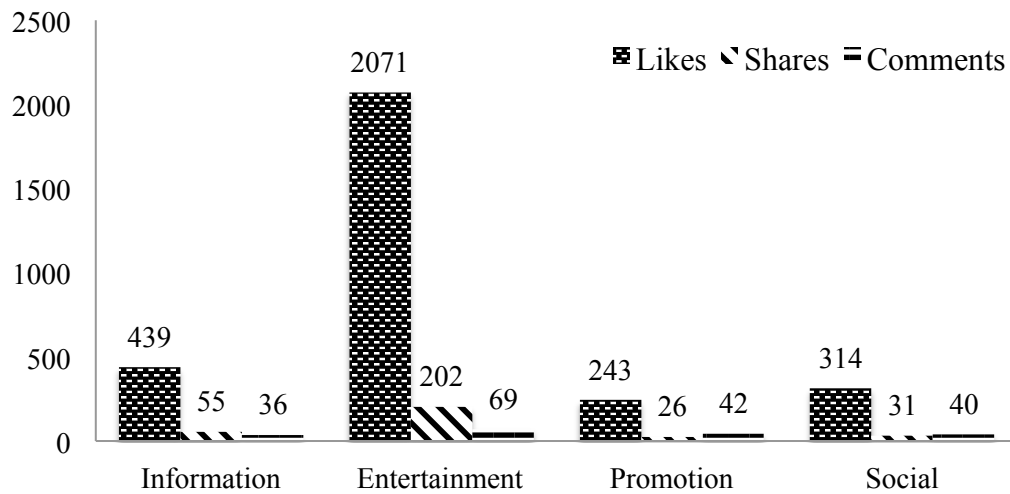


Figure 16 Average number of 'likes', 'shares' and 'comments' for post types – 'All posts'

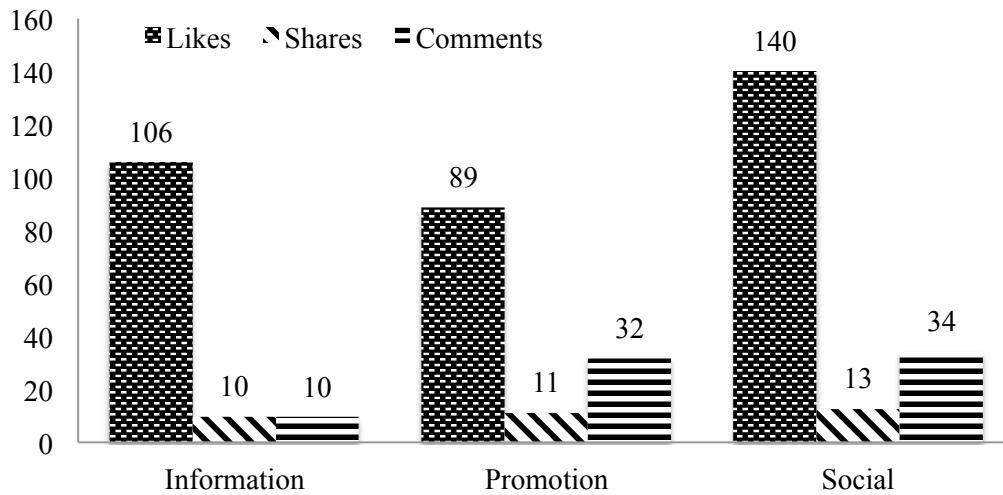


Figure 17 Average number of 'likes', 'shares' and 'comments' for post types – 'Icelandic posts'

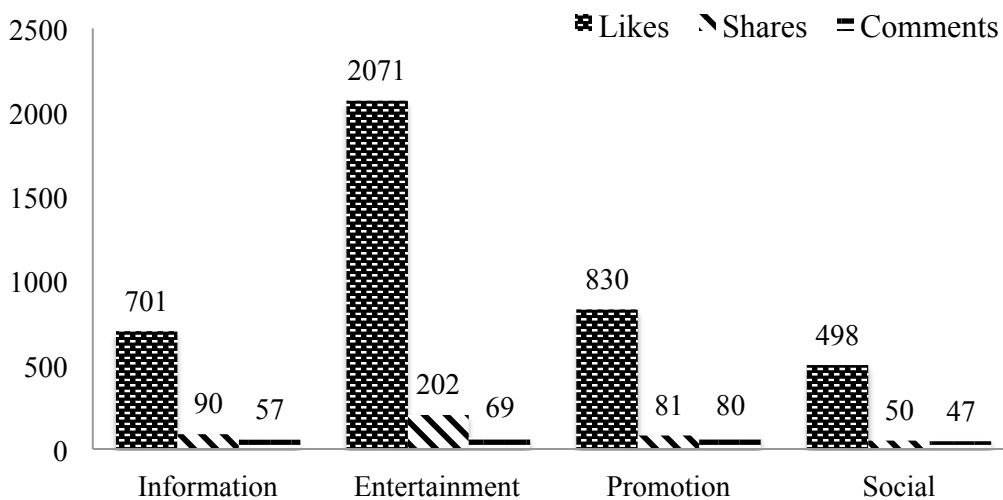


Figure 18 Average number of 'likes', 'shares' and 'comments' for post types – 'Public posts'